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THE VOICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY FOR 80 YEARS

ISSUE 206

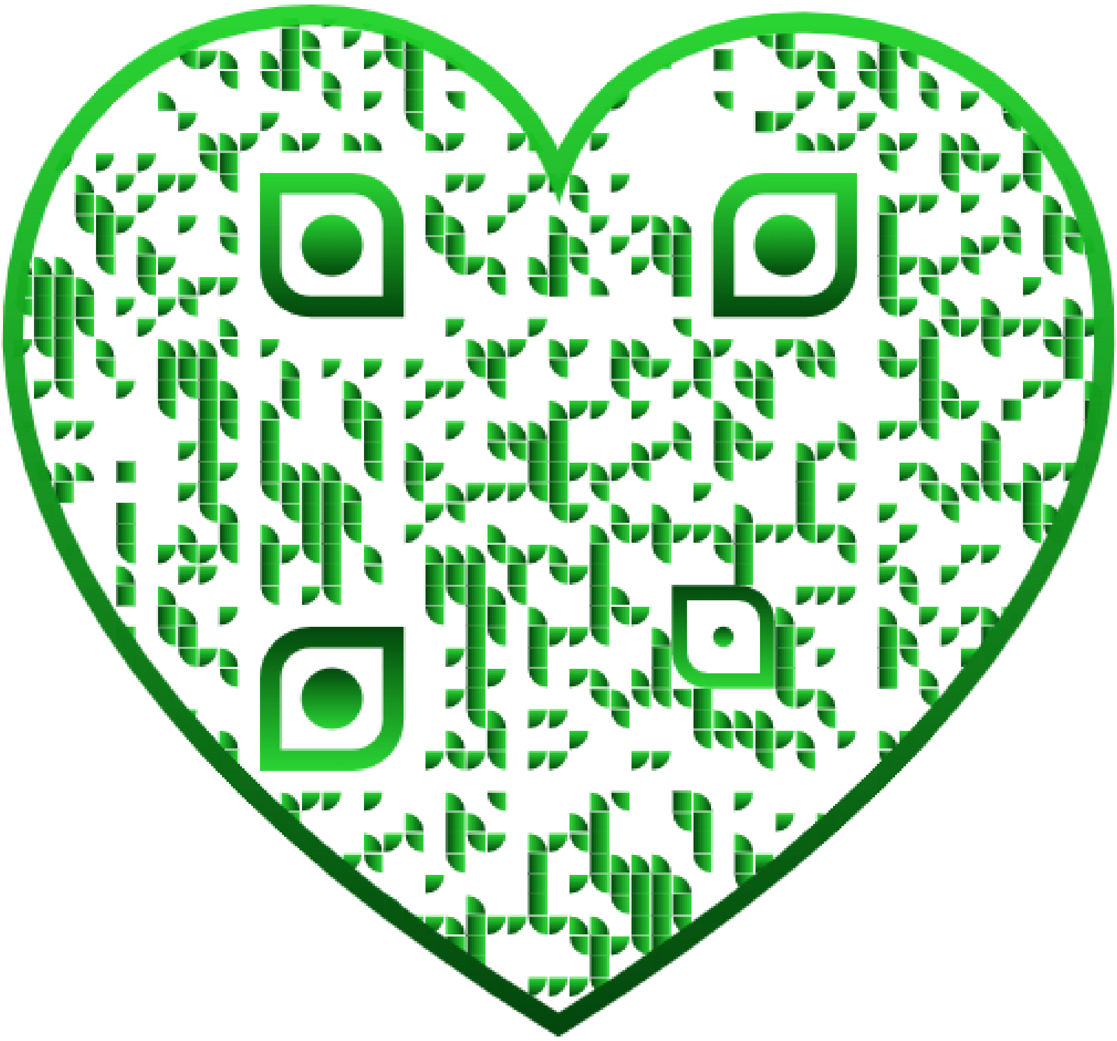
The Sanday Wreck: Shivering from the sands

Roman Caerleon: from fortress to field

Laying down the foundations: career pathways for aspiring archaeologists

The twilight of Roman Britain

80 YEARS | Council for British Archaeology



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Council for
British Archaeology

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Founded in 1944, the Council for British Archaeology promotes archaeology for all. It makes the case for safeguarding our archaeological heritage, and increasing public participation and understanding. It has a growing membership of individuals of all ages and over 600 organisations, and partnerships with Archaeology Scotland, CBA Wales/Cymru and CBA English Regional Groups. The CBA is an environmental charity registered in England & Wales (287815) and Scotland (sc041971), and a company limited by guarantee (1760254)

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From the editor

VOLTAGE TV

Caerleon Roman fortress and baths is a vast site. It sits nestled in the bend of the River Usk, a constant reminder in the landscape to the monumental echoes of Roman occupation. Undoubtedly a source of inspiration to eager antiquarians who began excavations here in the nineteenth century. From Fortress to Field is an update on the recent fieldwork that took place in Priory Fields between 2007 and 2010. Here we see a retrospective of the site, and a further glimpse into Roman life that thrived here 2,000 years ago.

Shivered from the Sands is a remarkable story of the discovery of the Sanday wreck, a 250-year-old British naval vessel that emerged from intertidal deposits after a violent storm in 2024. This feature is a thoughtful insight into a vigilant community proud of its maritime heritage; and how rigorous analysis and historical investigation helped pinpoint the ship's many uses and identity.

The end of the Roman project in Britain is probably the most enigmatic and debated period in the history of our Isles. The Twilight of Roman Britain looks at this period of change through the lens of the small finds and personal adornments. Can late Roman objects give us fresh insight into status, personal identity, and social transformation at the time of Romano-British decline?

And finally, Laying Down the Foundations highlights the various schemes and entry routes into the archaeological profession, and how pathways to make that career move from enthusiast, to volunteer, to professional are widening and becoming easier.

We'd love to hear from you – please send your letters, comment,s and article submissions to editor@archaeologyuk.org, or find us on social channels @archaeologyUK on X, BlueSky, Instagram and TikTok.

Raksha Dave

Erratum:
"With thanks to *British Archaeology* for sharing The Massive Melsonby Hoard with readers. It contains 28 tyres, which suggests complete vehicles were dismantled and buried, rather than the misquoted uneven number of 29 (page 24, Issue 205)."

On the cover: A close-up of the Sanday wreck in situ. See p 28 to find out more

Credit: Rod Thorne

Radiocarbon dates
Unless otherwise noted, ^{14}C dates in *British Archaeology* are calibrated at 95% confidence (cal AD or cal BC, expressed as AD or BC), rounded out after Mook (1986). See Radio-carbon dating by M Christie *et al*, *WikiJournal of Science* (2018), DOI: 10.15347/wjs/2018.006

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FIRST SIGHT

Carved stone relief, possibly depicting the upper part of a triton

See p 18 to find out more

FIRST SIGHT: VIANOVA & UCL

This issue's contributors include

Peter Guest
is a commercial archaeologist and numismatist who has spent much of his career researching Roman Wales. He has previously worked for Cardiff University, the British Museum, and the National Museum of Wales.

Andrew Gardner
is professor of the Archaeology of the Roman Empire at the UCL Institute of Archaeology.

Richard Henry
is the curator of archaeology at Southampton City Council who recently completed his PhD at the University of Reading looking at the end of Roman Britain.

Ben Saunders
is a senior marine archaeologist at Wessex Archaeology and led the combined, volunteer and specialist teams on the Sanday wreck. Based in Wessex Archaeology's Edinburgh office as part of the Marine Services team, working on community heritage projects alongside providing consultancy for offshore development.

CIfA
Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

CIfA
The aim of CIfA's skills programme is to develop and deliver the standards, learning, and qualifications archaeologists need, supporting their professional journeys from career entry through to senior leadership. We advocate for the value archaeology holds for society and its transformative power to change lives.

Continuing to showcase the best archaeology in the UK as we welcome our new editor

British Archaeology's new editor

We are delighted to announce that Anna Sharples will be taking on the role of editor of *British Archaeology* magazine from January 2026.

After graduating from the University of Cambridge with a BA in Classics, Anna produced print and digital content for the University's colleges and departments for over seven years.

As a professional editor her career has centred on magazine production for educational charities. She has an interest in archaeology sparked by working on the Aldborough Roman Town Project in North Yorkshire, and undertaking excavations in Greece.

She started her editorial work proofreading Latin for the Cambridge School Classics Project and taking on communications and publication roles at Clare College and St John's College.

With a strong background and experience in writing, commissioning, and editing digital, and print media, Anna's first task is to ensure *British Archaeology* magazine continues to showcase and present the very best of archaeology in the UK.

ANNA SHARPLES

Above: Anna Sharples will be taking over as editor of* British Archaeology *in January 2026

Readership survey

Anna is picking up *British Archaeology* at an important time for the magazine and the CBA as we continue to evolve as an organisation and a charity.

Our recent survey of the readership of *British Archaeology* has demonstrated how important the magazine is to our members and subscribers. We understand this and will be looking to strengthen it in the areas you most enjoy, as well as thinking of ways to draw in new audiences and extend the reach of our work.

Cornerstone

The survey underlines that the magazine is a key element of our work and the cornerstone of our membership offer. It enjoys a loyal readership as it strives to deliver high-quality, accessible archaeology to members, and subscribers.

Yet we also know it faces a number of challenges, not least the fall in retail sales that is an issue across print media.

We are also aware that we need to consider how we achieve a wider reach through different digital options beyond making the magazine available as a static electronic facsimile.

Digital support

We know that we need to support loyalty to the printed magazine and that any further digital options will need to be in addition to the printed magazine: 11% of readers said they would be open to reading a digital version, and 30% said maybe. These figures increase slightly when looking that survey responses made online.

Other media

When asked whether they would like to see magazine content expanded into other media – such as podcasts, YouTube interviews, or short-form video – 12% said yes, 40% were unsure, and 48% said no.

Similarly, when asked about short-form social media content (e.g., Instagram Reels or TikTok), only 8% said yes, 24% said maybe, and 67% said no. These figures showed a variance when considering the online responses on their own, with a greater preference for wider coverage in other media forms.

Access

Most readers access *British Archaeology* via their individual CBA membership (72%) or through a direct subscription to the magazine (20%). Only 3% of respondents access it through an organisational membership (such as local societies), and 3% purchase it a retail outlets.

Content

When asked about the content readers most enjoy, respondents expressed a clear preference for articles about archaeological news and projects with Latest Archaeology News (19%), Feature Articles (17%), and The World in Antiquity (11%).

These were followed by Letters (8%), Casefiles (6%), and CBA News (5%), with other recurring features such as From the Director, Sharp Focus, and Archaeology Now attracting smaller, but steady audiences.

When asked what content they would like to see more of, 9% requested additional features, 8% asked for more news, and 2% called for expanded coverage of CBA activities, such as Archaeology 8-25 or Archaeology Active. Very few wanted any reduction in existing sections.

Topics

Regarding topic preferences, respondents displayed consistent thematic interests: 18% wanted more on archaeological digs and fieldwork; 13% on sites and places to visit; 11% on artefacts; and 10% on museums. A smaller proportion sought more on experimental archaeology (8%), techniques (9%), and current sector issues (7%).

Design

The magazine's design is well regarded but not always considered exceptional. When asked to rate various design aspects, 26% described it as excellent, 56% as good with minor improvements needed, 11% as fair, and 4% as poor. Specific elements, such as photographs and illustrations, and layout were the most highly praised.

CBA links

The magazine continues to serve as the principal point of contact between the CBA and its members. When asked how they access CBA-related information, 25% of respondents cited the CBA website, 24% the CBA newsletter, and 12% the Festival of Archaeology. Only 10% follow CBA social media channels, while 22% said they do not access CBA information in any other way.

This indicates that for roughly a quarter of readers, *British Archaeology* remains their sole link to the organisation. While this reinforces the magazine's importance as a communications vehicle, it also highlights that opportunities exist for better cross-platform engagement.

The future

The overall impression from the readership survey is that *British Archaeology* is a visually solid and well produced publication, but one that could benefit from a more contemporary refresh – particularly in digital contexts – to maintain appeal among potential new readers.

Our task, and that of our new editor, Anna, is not to reinvent *British Archaeology*, but to evolve it and buffer it with other forms of dissemination and reach. We know that we need to maintain the trust and integrity that define the current magazine while opening gradual pathways for renewal.

Our reader survey will help us achieve this and give you more of what you want, and we would like to thank everyone who responded. ■

British Archaeology
February 1995 No 1
Air archaeology in trouble
Boxgrove Man's character
Origins of Roman London
Metal detecting's haul
British Archaeology
Excavating the Sanctuary
Neanderthals and genocide
World's earliest farming
British Archaeology
MORE PAGES – MORE FEATURES – MORE ARCHAEOLOGY!
Midsummer sunrise: first sight in 5,000 years
Stonehenge from a balloon – 100 years ago
Is this the British face of Nero?
King's table found at Westminster Palace
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British Archaeology
THE VOICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY FOR 80 YEARS
ISSUE 200
Reimagining historic landscapes
Bringing medieval Southampton to virtual life
My Heritage: archaeology through a youthful lens
The latest CBA news

***Left:* The changing face of British Archaeology magazine, 1995 (the very first issue), 2000, 2006 and 2025**

What did our readers say...

A selection of comments taken from the readership survey:

"Recently, there were too many articles of a naval gazing variety looking at the profession. More focus back on archaeological discoveries would be appreciated."

"It's an excellent magazine for an enthusiastic (if amateur) follow of archaeological developments. Keep up the good work."

"Sometimes there is a big difference in length between articles. The balance of topics needs to be carefully considered."

"Personally think that the magazine covers so much of the archaeological profession that would be difficult to access elsewhere. Great work."

"The articles are thankfully less academic than previously. Better if the articles could be easily readable, yet equally detailed and accurate as now."

"Casefiles by Catherine Bell are superb… Catherine writes concise articles with clarity."

Leicester market dig reveals 2,000 years of city's past

Archaeologists from the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) have uncovered extraordinary evidence of 2,000 years of human activity beneath Leicester's market place. The discoveries were made during excavations carried out alongside groundworks for the city's new market square. Since work began in July, the ULAS team has revealed a wealth of archaeological features spanning multiple eras of Leicester's past, including a Roman infant burial, and the remains of a lost sixteenth-century dungeon.

Among the most poignant finds is the grave of a Roman infant, placed there around 1,900 years ago. The burial was discovered beneath the floor of an early timber building, offering a rare glimpse into the lives and deaths of Leicester's Roman inhabitants.

Excavations revealed that the memory of this burial was later lost, as a subsequent Roman building, this time constructed in stone, was built directly over the earlier timber house. Associated with this later stone structure, the team has uncovered Roman tesserae, pottery, coins, and items of jewellery. Nearby, they also uncovered rarely found Roman pottery kilns.

Right: Archaeologists excavating the site of the sixteenth-century dungeon

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES [2]

From the medieval period, archaeologists have identified the earliest medieval market surfaces, which consisted of compacted pebbles, overlain by silts and successive resurfacing layers. Traces of former medieval market stalls, preserved as post-holes, were also identified. The team also located a stone-lined well and the remains of a dungeon, once described in the mid-sixteenth century as 'a most vile prison'. This dungeon is believed to have been part of the Gainsborough Chamber, a high-status civic building first mentioned in records in 1533. The chamber served as a venue for judicial proceedings, mayoral business, feasting, and celebrations, until its demolition in around 1748.

The team also identified thick soil layers from the Anglo-Saxon era, bridging the gap between the Roman and medieval periods. Dr Gavin Speed, who is leading the dig on behalf of ULAS, said: "Analysis of these soils may shed light on whether and how people continued to live among the ruins of the former Roman city."

"Leicester is one of the most archaeologically explored cities in the country, yet this particular area has remained relatively untouched – until now," he added. "The redevelopment of the market square has given us a rare opportunity to investigate what lies beneath this important site." He noted that while they anticipated finding Roman evidence, "the discoveries have surpassed our expectations".

Mayor Peter Soulsby said: "Before the market square is paved in porphyry for the future, it's important that we take the opportunity to learn as much as we can about its past. I hope we'll be able to put some of the archaeologists' remarkable finds on display for the public to enjoy too." ■

HES launches consultation to shape future of Scotland's historic sites

Right: HES team members at Stirling Castle

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) is inviting people across Scotland to participate in a new public consultation, which aims to help shape the future of some of the nation's most important historic places and collections.

HES looks after more than 300 historic sites, 43,000 related objects, and five million archival records on behalf of the people of Scotland. Public input from the consultation will influence long-term decisions on managing Scotland's heritage. The responses will help inform HES's Properties and Collections Strategy: Towards Sustainable Stewardship. This is a long-term plan for how historic places and collections are cared for, used, and managed for generations to come.

The new strategy comes as Scotland's historic environment faces significant challenges, including climate change, rising costs, and a shortage of traditional skills needed to maintain heritage sites. Simultaneously, new technologies offer opportunities for digital access and interpretation, while visitor expectations are evolving towards sustainable tourism and more inclusive storytelling.

The consultation gives the public a chance to influence how HES responds to these challenges and ensures decisions reflect community needs. Participants will be asked for their views on the proposed strategy, its long-term vision, and where HES should focus its efforts across its sites and collections.

Dr David Mitchell, director of Cultural Assets at HES, said: "Scotland's historic environment requires a shared stewardship approach. We have both challenges and opportunities before us and this strategy seeks to set these out, as well as how we will deal with them going forward. What we choose to do will have long lasting consequences, so it's important that all views are taken into account. We're asking everyone with an interest to take part and help shape the future."

The consultation is available now on Citizen Space. It will remain open until 23 January 2026. The final strategy is expected to be published in spring 2026. ■

Rare seventeenth-century painted church ceiling conserved in Perthshire

Expert conservators from Historic Environment Scotland (HES) have undertaken vital work on the unique seventeenth-century painted ceiling at St Mary's Church in Grandtully, Perthshire. Conservation was deemed necessary following a condition survey last year. Painting conservators Ailsa Murray and Briege Thomas fixed flaking paint into place and cleaned the surface of loose dirt and debris.

The ceiling, first painted in the 1600s, was commissioned by Sir William Stewart and Dame Agnes Moncrieff, whose arms adorn it. It is painted in a style typical of the Scottish Renaissance and is divided into roundels and arches depicting various coats of arms, saints, and proverbs. The central panel is thought to show the Last Judgement.

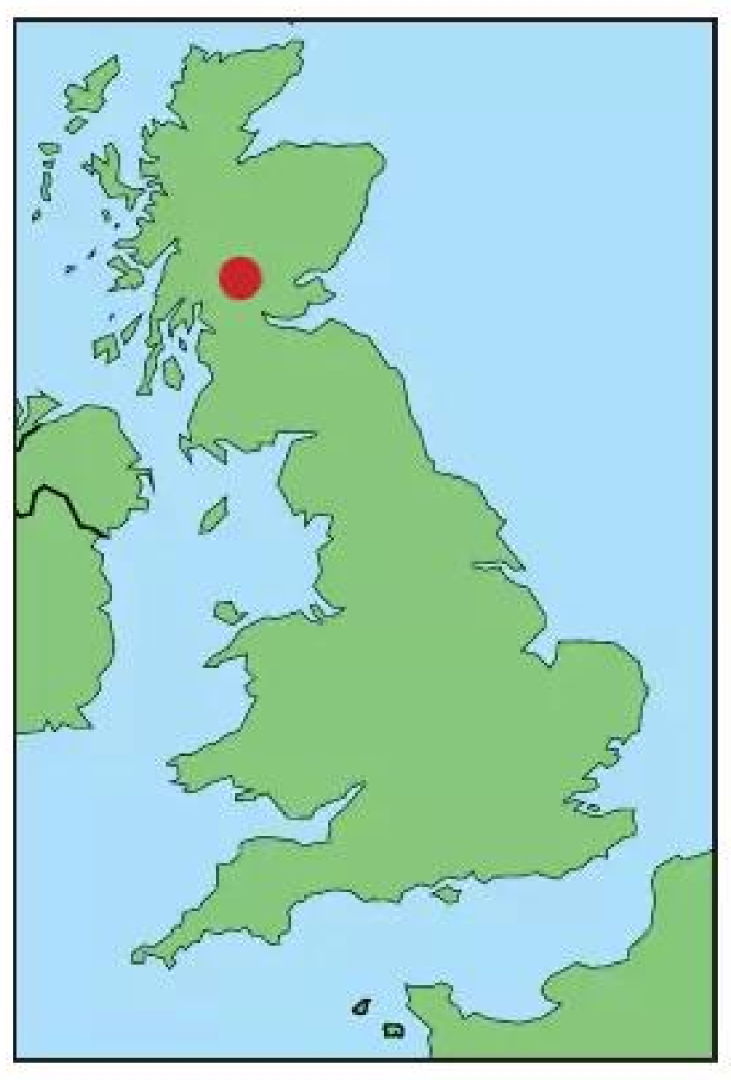
The church was taken into care in 1944, at which time the roof and ceiling were in poor condition. They have since required repeated treatment for timber rot and insect damage. Due to the organic nature of the ceiling's timbers and paint, it is highly susceptible to environmental changes. To ensure the artwork's long-term survival, its condition is monitored through surveys every five years.

Ailsa Murray, painting conservator at HES, said: "The ceiling of St Mary's Church is a unique chapter in Grandtully's history, and by ensuring we stay abreast of its condition and conserving it when necessary, we can make sure future generations can enjoy it for as long as possible."

She noted the technical challenges of the project: "A project like this requires knowledge of the original techniques used back in the 1600s in order to select the most appropriate approach and material for treatment. It's also challenging to work against gravity."

For paintings conservation trainee Briege Thomas, it was a "rare and exciting" opportunity. "When you're up on the scaffold, you can see all the fine details which aren't visible from the ground. At that distance, I could really see the brushstrokes of the original paint, as well as the different campaigns of restoration the ceiling has undergone over its long history."

St Mary's Church is now open for visitors once more. ■



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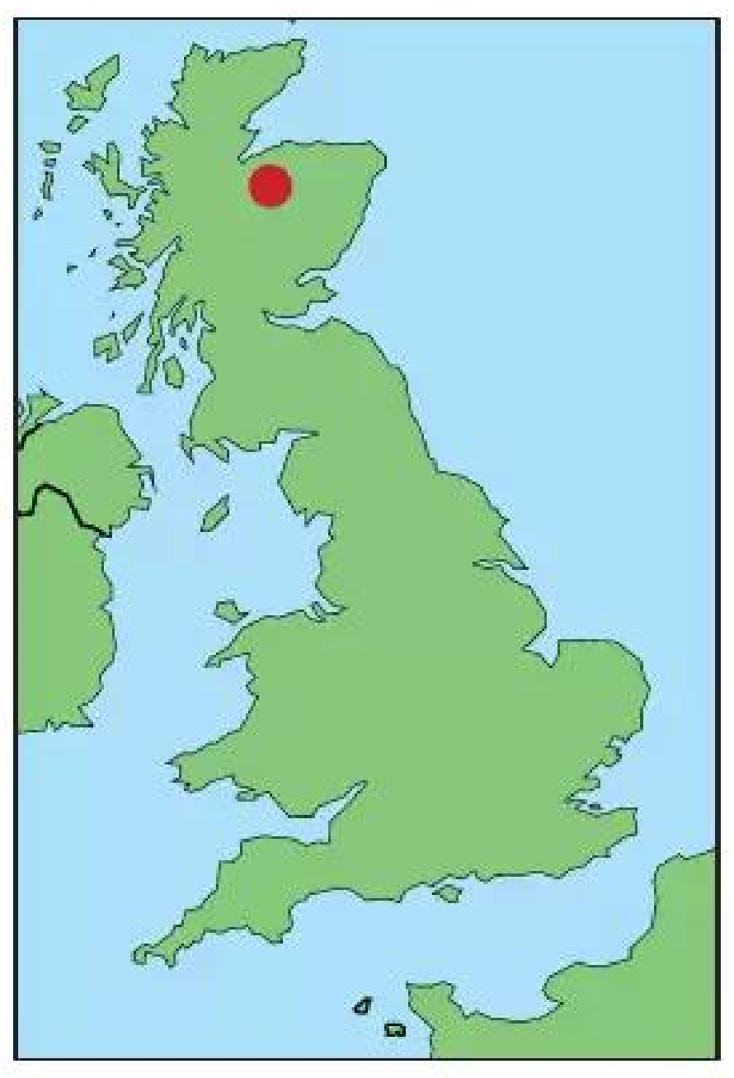
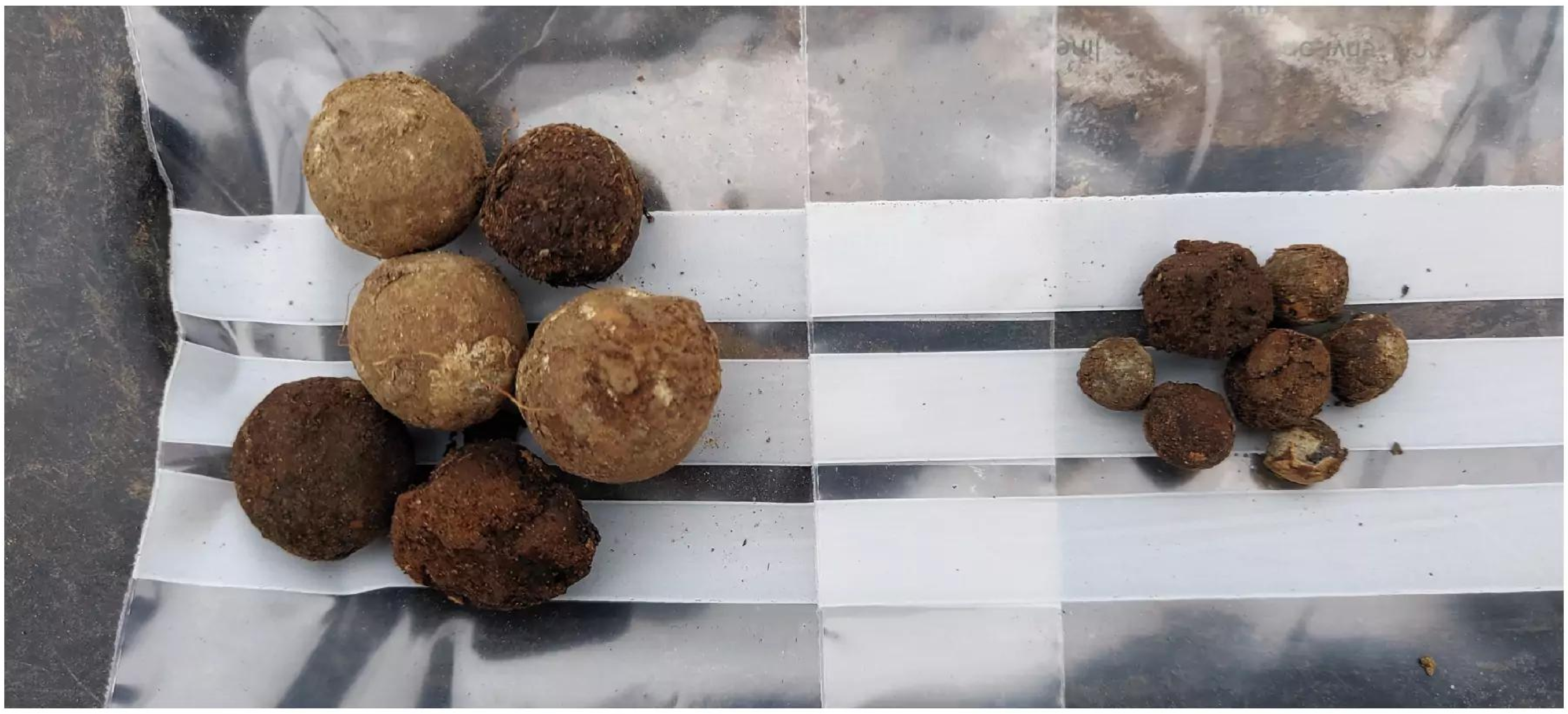
Hundreds of Jacobite projectiles recovered from unexplored area of Culloden





NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND [3]

Above: Lead buck and ball shot found in a single location at Culloden

Archaeologists from the University of Glasgow and the National Trust for Scotland have recovered more than 100 projectiles from a previously unexplored area of Culloden Battlefield. The discoveries, made in October by a team led by Professor Tony Pollard and Derek Alexander, include lead musket balls and what is believed to be a three-pound cannon ball fired by Jacobite artillery.

The finds were recovered from an area between the initial battle lines that had not previously yielded archaeological material, likely due to boggy ground and disturbance from nineteenth-century forestation. The project leaders believe the artefacts provide evidence for one of the most dramatic episodes of the 1746 battle – a brave stand by a battalion of Irish troops in French service, who covered the Jacobite retreat.

Metal detecting was one of three different, but complementary, techniques used to investigate the area

Above: Lead grapeshot found at the battlefield

Tony Pollard explained the significance of the finds: “As the Jacobites retreated, a battalion of Irish troops in French service, fighting with the Jacobites, made a brave stand against hundreds of mounted men from Cobham’s Dragoons and possibly Kingston’s Horse, advancing from the right of Cumberland’s line.

Pollard added: “The job of these horsemen was to cut down the disordered Jacobites, and we have recovered some of the shot fired from their heavy pistols. This valiant action helped thousands of Jacobites get away from the field, but it gets only brief mentions in most of the history books.”

Derek Alexander, head of Archaeology for the Trust, noted that the new evidence will assist in the long-term management of the battlefield. “We look forward to bringing the team back together to carry out a more detailed examination of the finds,” he said. ■

Record £1m donation supports conservation of Shakespeare's Hall's Croft

UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust has received an unprecedented £1m donation to fund crucial conservation work at Hall's Croft in Stratford-upon-Avon. The Grade I listed building, dating to 1613, was the home of William Shakespeare's daughter Susanna and her husband, John Hall.

The conservation and repair efforts are being supported by ongoing archaeological investigations from the University of Huddersfield's Centre of Archaeology. Hall's Croft is one of the last complete examples of Jacobean architecture and one of a small number of surviving buildings that researchers are certain William Shakespeare would have walked in. The conservation work is vital for its survival, as the building is suffering from significant structural issues.

Steel girders installed during the twentieth century to support the failing roof have resulted in its destabilisation. A seventeenth-century extension is pulling away from the original house, causing the two parts to lean in different directions. Furthermore, repair work to internal panelling, undertaken in the 1950s, has also had a detrimental effect on the original timbers.

The donation, the largest private donation in the Trust's 177-year history, was given by the Olivier Award-winning US playwright Ken Ludwig. Archaeologists from Huddersfield's Centre of Archaeology are supervising the conservation works, which are revealing important details about the building's original construction and later development.

Prior to the works, the Centre produced a digital model of the building to inform more targeted repairs and provide a permanent record of its current state.

"Hall's Croft is an excellent historic survival and an authentic link to Shakespearean heritage," said William Mitchell from the Centre of Archaeology.

"Thanks to Ken's generous support, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust can now move forward with the sensitive restoration of this important site and complete the vital archaeological work. The insights uncovered through this research will be invaluable in guiding the conservation efforts and preserving the story of Hall's Croft for future researchers."

The University of Huddersfield's Centre of Archaeology will continue to research the building and monitor the works into late 2026. ■

Left: William Mitchell and Ken Ludwig outside Hall's Croft

Silver Defence Employer Recognition Scheme award for Ethos Heritage CIC

ETHOS HERITAGE CIC

Ethos Heritage CIC, a community-focused archaeological and heritage company based in Beverley, East Yorkshire, and Malton, North Yorkshire, has been awarded the Silver Award in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS).

This prestigious recognition celebrates organisations that demonstrate outstanding support for the armed forces community. Ethos Heritage CIC is one of the first community archaeology companies in the UK to achieve this honour, which was formally presented at a ceremony at York Racecourse on 2 October 2025.

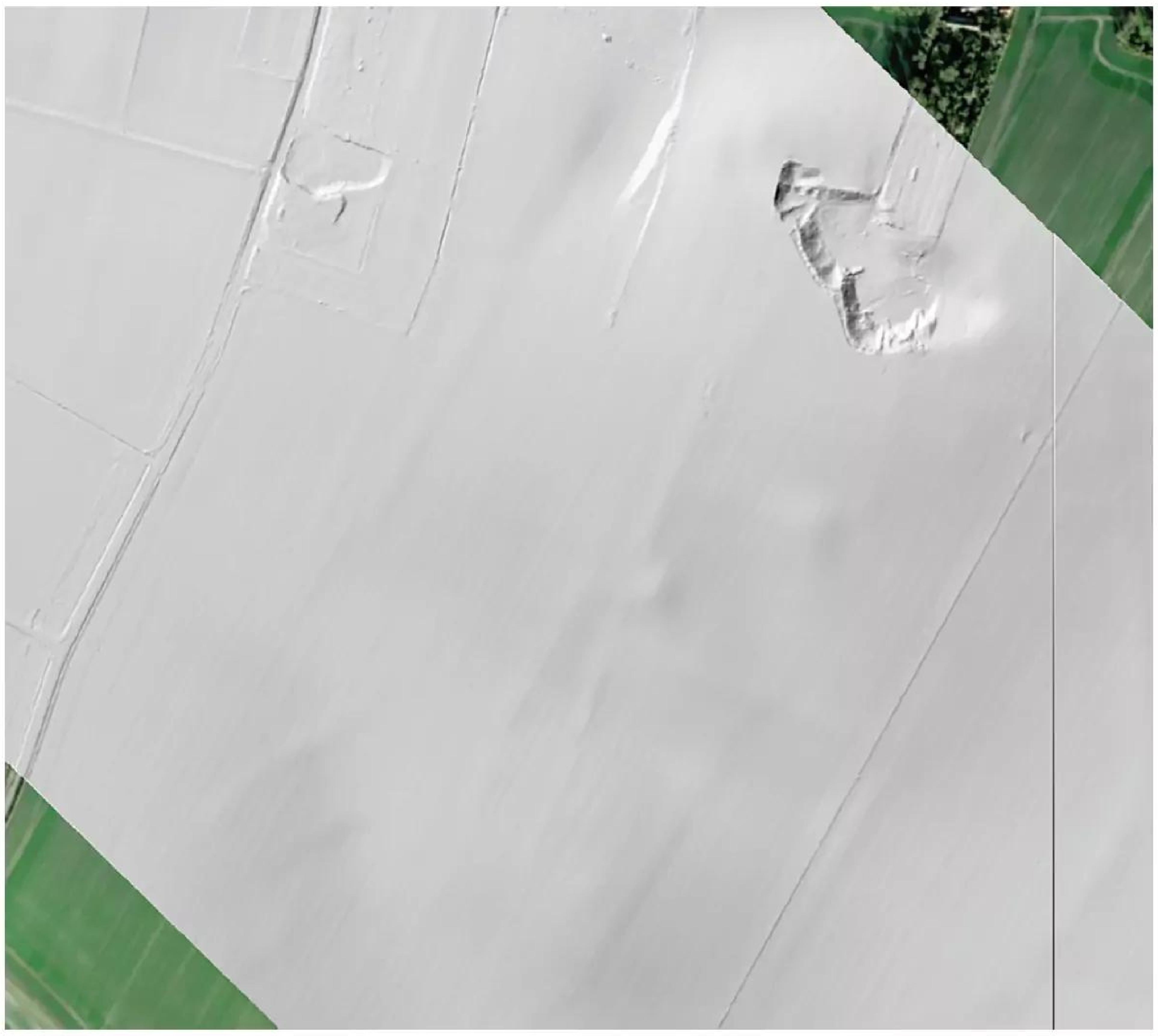
The company has made this support a central part of its mission. It offers bursaries to members of the military and veterans to cover travel, food, and accommodation, removing financial barriers to participation. It also creates pathways for veterans and reservists to engage in archaeology, both professionally and through community-led projects.

Above: The Silver Award was formally presented to Ethos Heritage CIC at a ceremony held at York Racecourse on 2 October 2025

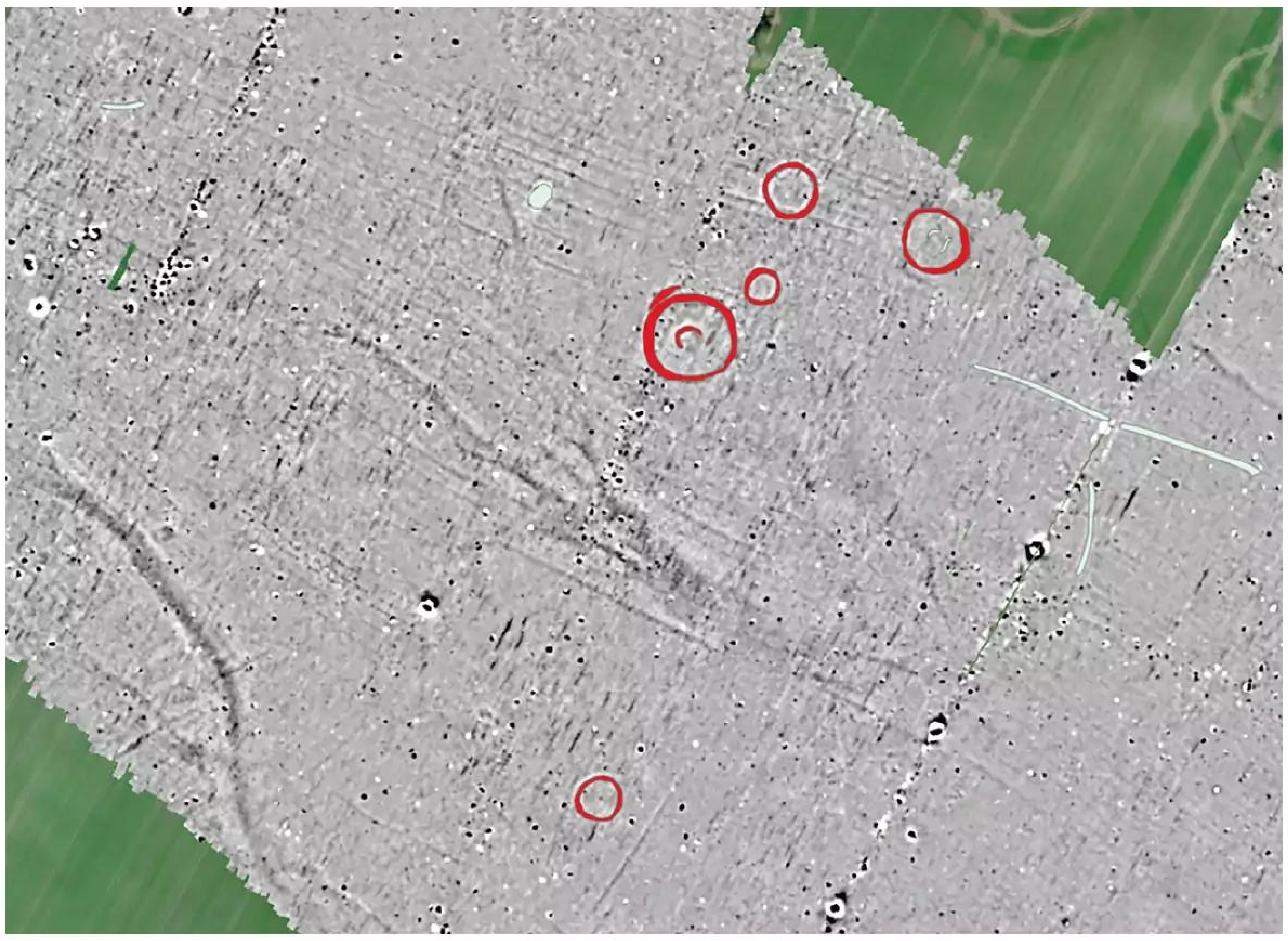
Since its founding in 2022, the organisation has delivered numerous projects across North and East Yorkshire. "We are immensely proud to receive the Silver Award," said Richard Coates, director of Ethos Heritage CIC. "As a company with strong ties to the armed forces, this recognition reflects our ongoing commitment to supporting those who serve, those who have served, and their families."

"Community archaeology is about uncovering the past, but also about building stronger communities today – and the contribution of veterans and reservists is central to that vision." ■

Bronze Age burial ground in Cambridgeshire receives protection following surveys for East West Railway



Right: *Money Hill LiDAR Results*



Right: *Results of the Money Hill Magnetometry survey*

EAST WEST RAIL [3]

An ancient burial ground at Money Hill in Cambridgeshire has been designated as a Scheduled Monument by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on the advice of Historic England. The protection follows investigations by the East West Railway Company (EWR Co) alongside Historic England to understand the site ahead of new railway construction.

Recent surveys commissioned by EWR Co, and conducted by Wessex Archaeology and Cotswold Archaeology, have significantly expanded known details of the site, located on a chalk ridge between Haslingfield and Barrington.

The work led to the discovery of additional barrows, bringing the total count from five to 11. While three barrows remain visible as earthwork mounds despite centuries of agricultural activity, advanced geophysical surveys revealed potential burial pits within some ring ditches.

The mounds vary from 20 to 55m in diameter, and the newly protected area includes spaces between them where 'flat burials' may lie.

Round barrow cemeteries are nationally rare. To protect the integrity of the site, EWR Co has evolved its proposals from original plans for a railway cutting to a mined tunnel.

Tristan Lincoln-Gordon, head of Environment at EWR Co, said: "We've worked closely with Historic England to assess the remains of the Money Hill barrow cemetery, and we welcome its scheduling."

He added: "Our proposals have evolved through collaboration to ensure this nationally significant site is protected, demonstrating how development and heritage can successfully coexist."

Tony Calladine, East of England regional director at Historic England, added: "The ancient burial grounds of Money Hill in Cambridgeshire demonstrate the importance of our historic landscapes and the stories they tell of our ancestors."

"The archaeological surveys carried out for East West Rail have given an amazing insight into Bronze Age life and led to the protection of this important site, connecting us with communities from the past as the infrastructure project connects people today." ■

Above: Drone survey of the Money Hill site

Udig: Stanwick Hall

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Summaries
Dr Alison Edwards

Above right: Biological kinship within the post-Roman cemetery (Site 3). Burials sampled for aDNA are outlined in black. Coloured boxes indicate the DNA sample code, genetic sex, mitochondrial haplogroup, Y-chromosome haplogroup (where relevant), and genetic kinship for each individual

Below right: Principal component analysis displaying the Worth Matravers individuals, alongside other early medieval aDNA samples from England (yellow squares; Gretzinger et al. 2022) and contemporaneous North African individuals (blue triangles; seventh to eleventh centuries AD Guanches from the Canary Islands; Rodríguez-Varela et al, 2017). Modern samples (grey crosses) from West Eurasia and West/North Africa are shown in the underlying plot

In post-Roman Europe, your relations defined your social position, relative freedoms, and even the possibilities for marriage and procreation.

Kinship can be difficult to discern in the archaeological record, but the study of ancient DNA offers a useful window into biological relatedness. Archaeological studies have tended to focus more on social identity and personhood, rather than kinship. Where family groups are proposed within mortuary contexts, indicators such as cemetery patterns, grave goods, and the identification of inherited skeletal traits are seen as evidence for biological relatedness.

The layout of cemeteries can also reveal information about the importance of kin groups, whether social or biological. In early medieval England, recent aDNA work demonstrates the large-scale arrival of new groups from the European continent in the fifth and sixth centuries onwards, altogether accounting for about two-thirds of the ancestry of people inhabiting England today.

Dorset lies at the western limits of early continental-influenced Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. The burials in this region instead show a continuation of late Roman practices. The archaeological evidence suggests a marked cultural divide between Dorset (and areas to the west) and the Anglo-Saxon-influenced areas to the east.

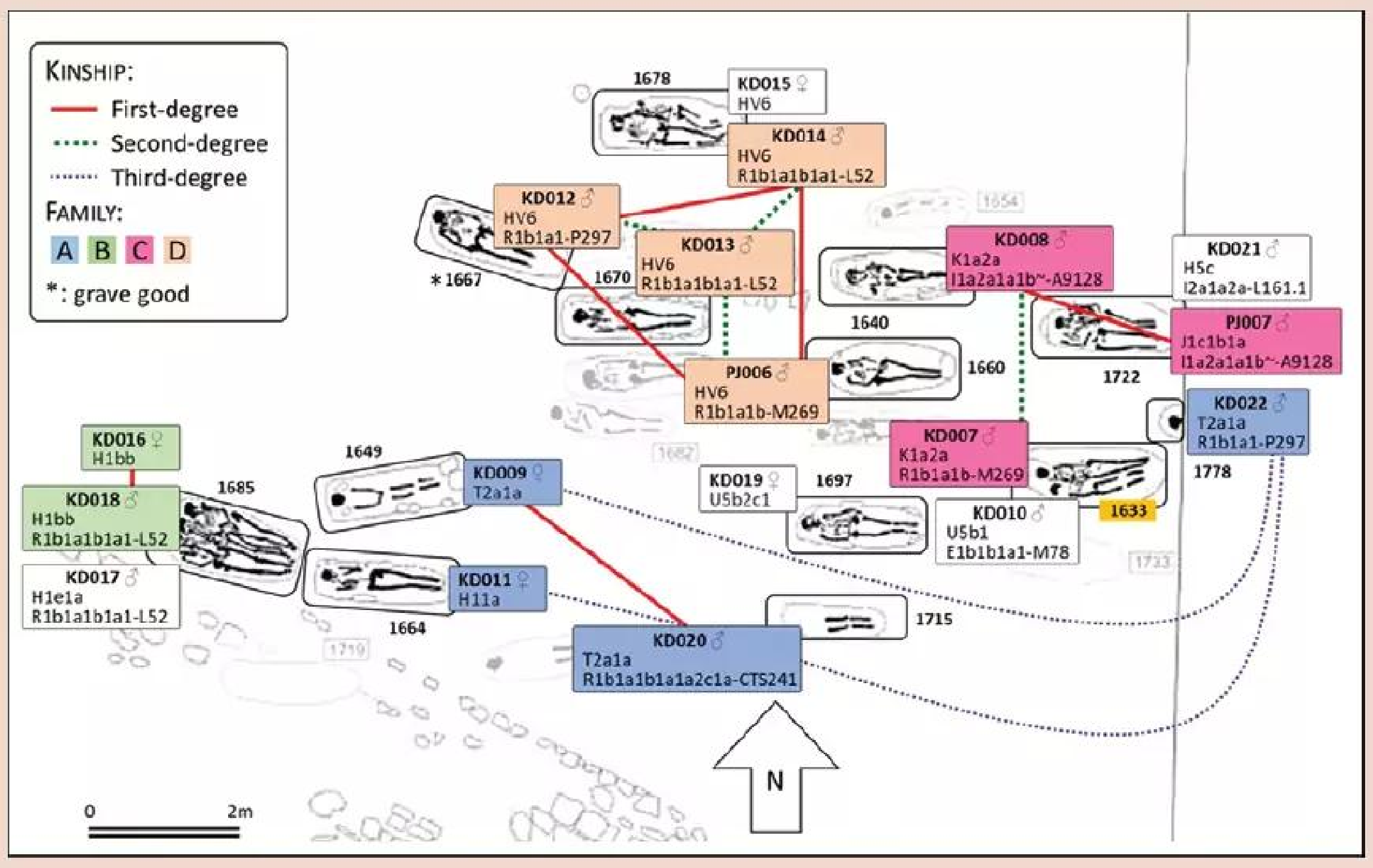
To investigate kinship in early medieval Dorset, a recent study analysed 20 individuals from the site of Worth Matravers on the Isle of Purbeck. Worth Matravers did not become part of Anglo-Saxon Wessex until the mid-seventh century. The study did genomic and dietary-isotopic analyses to investigate diet, burial location within the cemetery, and biological versus social kinship at the site.

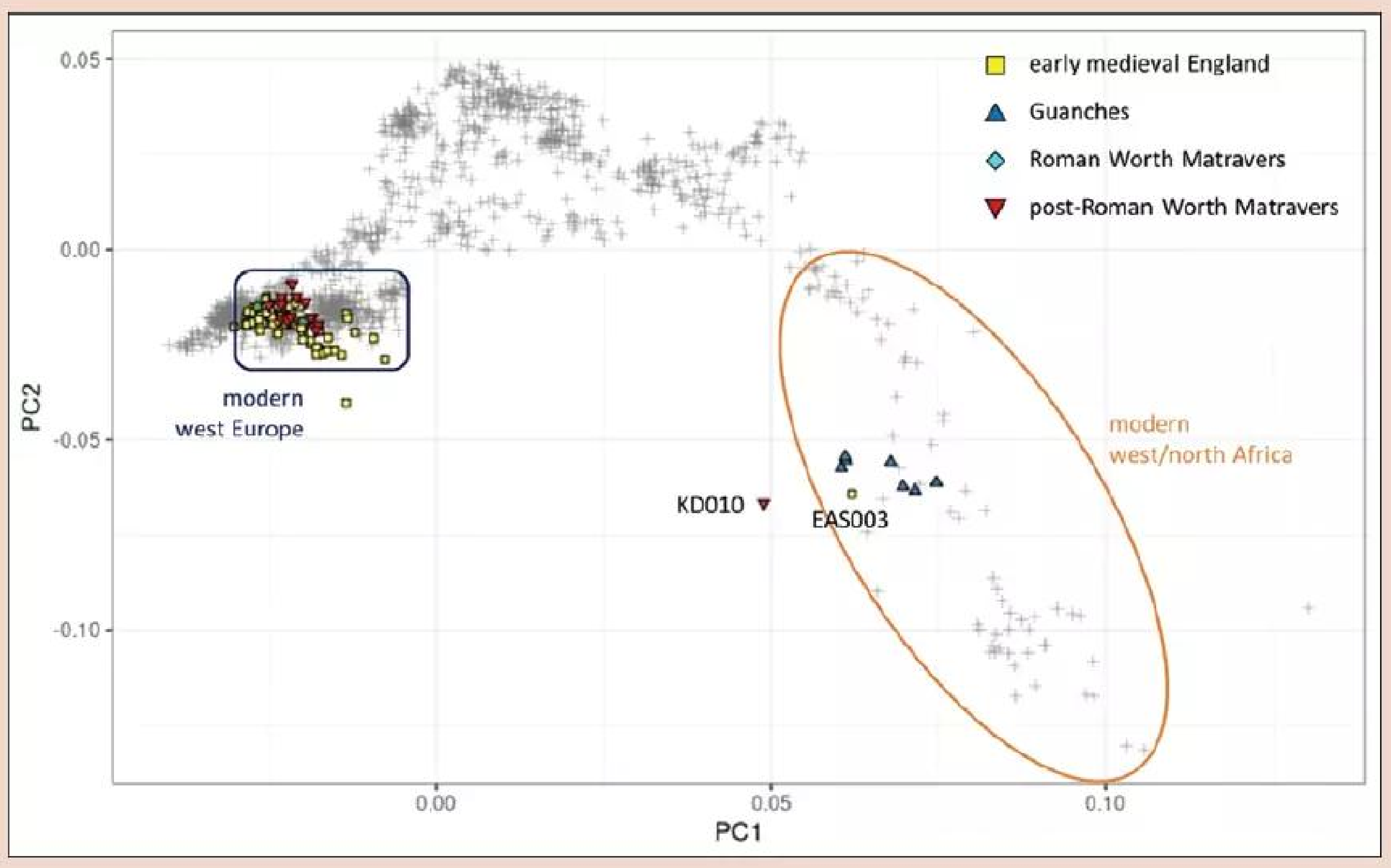
Radiocarbon dating shows that the cemetery was most likely in use for around 100 years, concentrated around cal AD 605–650. Despite proximity to the coast, none of the post-Roman individuals appeared to be reliant on sea protein, with mainly terrestrial diets. Few grave goods were discovered at the site. This is typical of a persisting or emerging British cultural zone, and contrasts with the furnished Anglo-Saxon cemeteries of eastern England.

A wide range of both mitochondrial and Y-chromosome haplogroups were present in the sampled DNA, suggesting a diverse heritage. A number of genetic lineages were identified which can be traced to population migrations associated with the arrival of the Bell Beaker cultural traditions around 2450 BC. Two individuals had a Y-chromosome lineage which likely arrived from continental North Europe during the early medieval period. One individual had a genetic component present in Britain since the Neolithic.

Most of the mitochondrial lineages identified at Worth Matravers may be considered local during the British Iron Age, with no indication of African ancestry along the maternal line. Several haplotypes, however, suggest that some individuals had continental northern European matrilineal ancestry.

Despite the predominance of local ancestry both maternal and paternal lineages display diverse ancestry, implying that the community buried at Worth Matravers reflects both local genetic continuity and the inward migration of men and women from the European continent before, and possibly during, the early medieval period.





One young male individual's DNA suggested a West African ancestor several generations back in the family tree. Despite his genetic differences, this man evidently received similar treatment in death to other individuals at the site and consumed a comparable diet during his lifetime. A similar African-derived genome-wide ancestry is identified in a young female from the contemporaneous cemetery at Updown (Eastry, Kent) in southeast England. As this ancestor was relatively recent (around grandparent level), it is unlikely to represent migration during the Roman period. Instead this suggests an ongoing cosmopolitanism in the post-Roman period that was not limited to the influx of northern continental populations.

Four potential family units were identified in the cemetery. 70% (9 out of 13), males sampled had biological kinship to another individual, mainly through the maternal line. None of the five females sampled had clear biological kinship to each other. Biological relationships informed the placement of burials, with family groups identifiable in the organisation of graves. Given this emphasis on the proximity of genetic kin in the cemetery, the inclusion of unrelated individuals in multiple burials potentially also highlights the importance of their social connections, or the cultural perception of kinship.

Together, the genetic and cultural evidence from Worth Matravers points to pluralistic family histories and social bonds that created and sustained this community.

Such familial flexibility allowed this small, rural, coastal community to negotiate concepts of kinship and create new relationships during a time of considerable change, while the genetic lineages identified in the cemetery reveal how it was connected to the wider political and cultural worlds.

Ancient genomes reveal cosmopolitan ancestry and maternal kinship patterns at post-Roman Worth Matravers, Dorset by M. George B. Foody (University of Huddersfield) et al

MOODY ET AL [2]

Right: Location of Aldborough in northern England

Right: Aerial photograph of Aldborough showing the extent of the walled town and the location of the sediment core

A recent interdisciplinary study has analysed the metal pollutants in a sediment core from the Roman metal-producing centre of Aldborough, North Yorkshire, on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales. This was one of the largest lead-producing regions of Europe between the Roman and modern periods.

Aldborough began as the Roman town of Isurium Brigantum, which acted as the administrative centre of the region – the civitas of the Brigantes – through the Roman period. Excavations in its northern sector have revealed large-scale industrial activity with substantial evidence for iron-smithing. Chemical analysis of soils confirms high levels of iron and arsenic, alongside lead, copper, and zinc, suggesting the production/working of these metals in the vicinity.

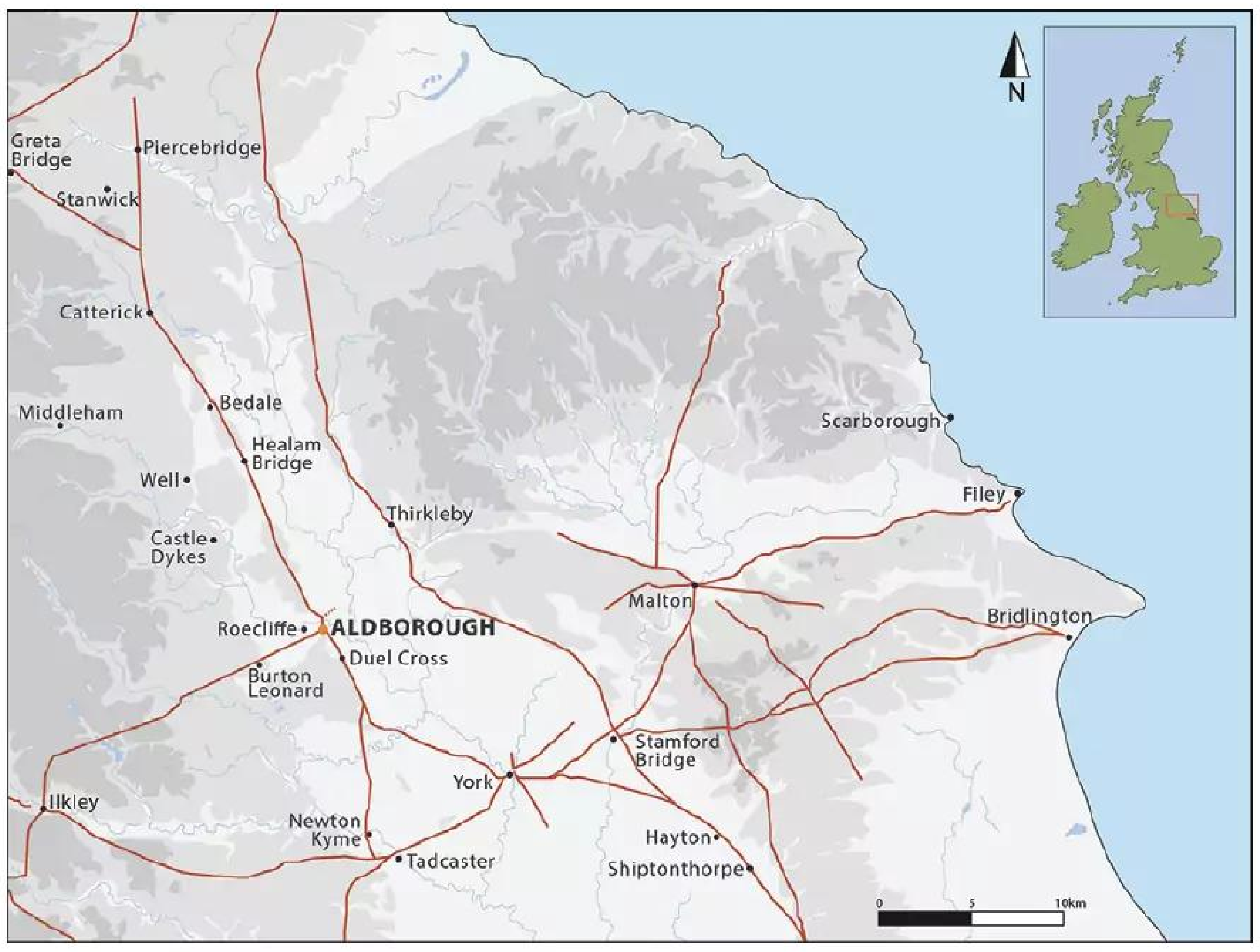
The site was probably founded as a trading centre between 70 and 80, with a planned town laid out later, c.120. Substantial activity appears to have continued in the area of Aldborough into the fifth century and beyond, with evidence of urban replanning.

No mines were recorded in the Dales in the Domesday Book, but this may not mean there were none. Alluvial deposits from the River Ouse in York demonstrate lead production upriver in the Dales, delivering pollutants continuously from the ninth/tenth to thirteenth centuries.

By the twelfth century, Boroughbridge (Aldborough's medieval successor, 1.8km westward) became the administrative centre for the 'mine of Yorkshire', comprising the Yorkshire Dales, whose lead was distributed via the linked Ure-Ouse-Humber river system, and the River Tees. The region was one of the largest lead exporters worldwide by 1700.

Between 200 and 1150, historical evidence is limited or absent. An opportunity to investigate the metals economy through time in the Aldborough area was provided by survey work around the Roman town. A core of sediment taken was from the sediment of a paleochannel of the River Ure, 500m from the Roman town.

The study combined pollen analysis, radiocarbon/optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) dating, and multi-element ICP-MS (inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry) analysis with textual and archaeological evidence. Cross-comparison shows that fluctuations in pollution levels correspond with sociopolitical events, pandemics and recorded trends in British metal production c.1100-1700.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Piercebridge
Stanwick
Catterick
Middleham
Bedale
Healam Bridge
Well
Castle Dykes
Thirkleby
Scarborough
Filey
Malton
Bridlington
Roecliffe
ALDBOROUGH
Duel Cross
Burton Leonard
Stamford Bridge
York
Ilkley
Newton Kyme
Tadcaster
Hayton
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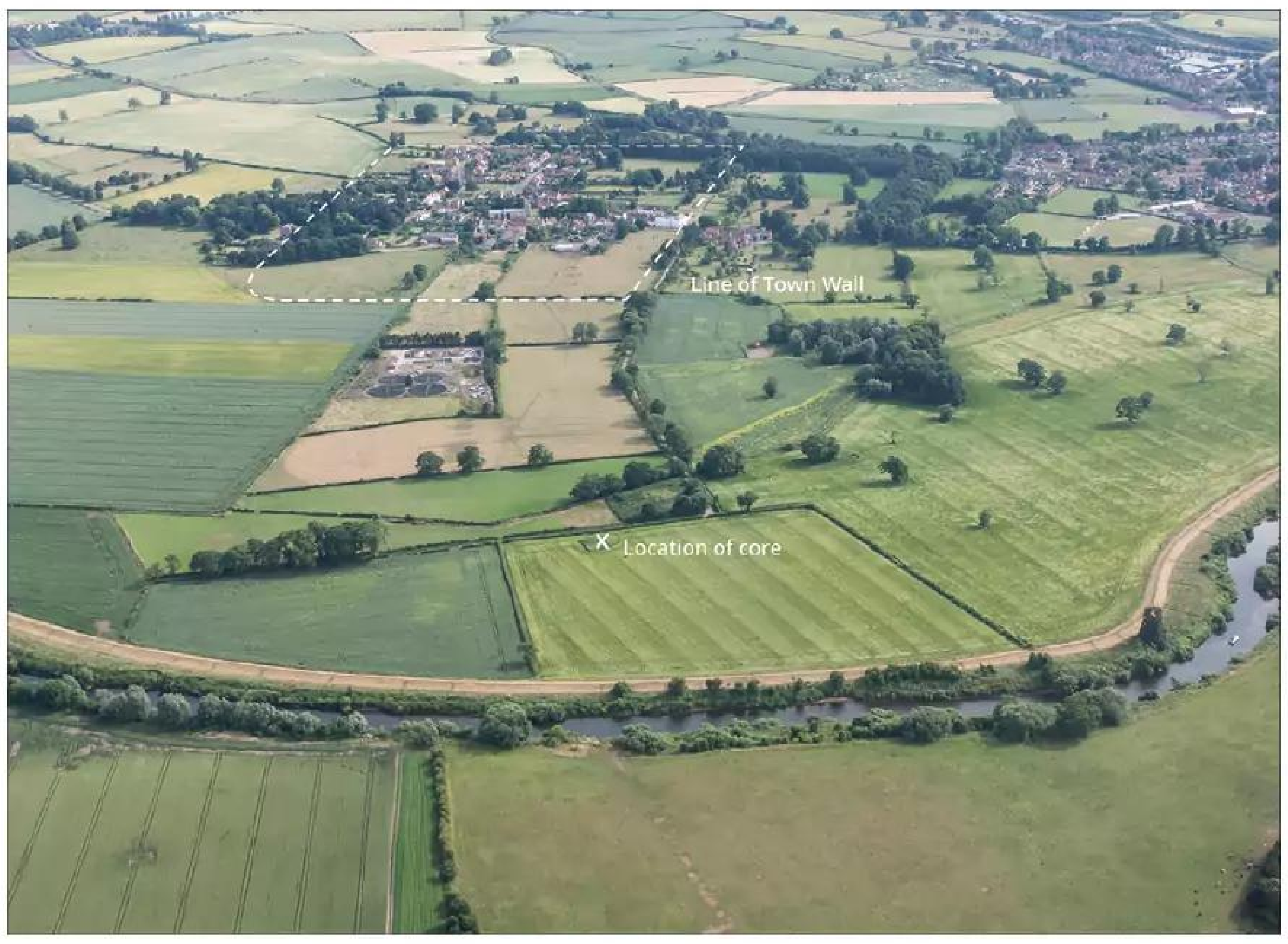
R. FERRABY


Line of Town Wall
Location of core

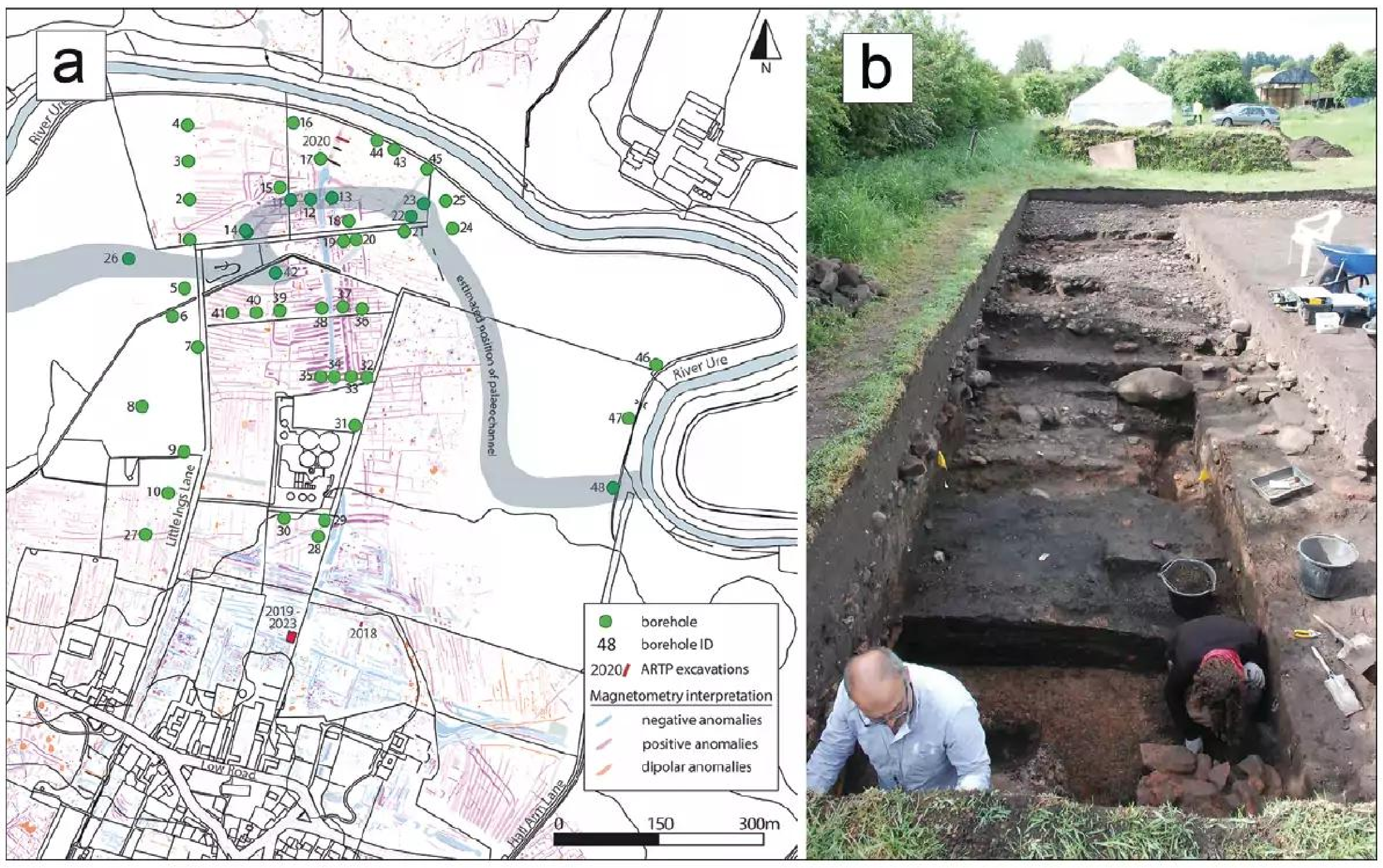
D. POWLESLAND & V. HERRING

Comparing the more recent results (with a lower error margin) against documented historical events provides confidence in the study's identification of trends in the earlier, less closely dated section of the core (c.345–1100).

The results demonstrate that the smelting and working of iron were the principal metal-producing activities in the vicinity between the late Roman and modern periods.

Perhaps surprisingly, the period from the mid-fourth to early-to-mid sixth century does not show total collapse in metal production after the withdrawal of Roman provincial administration c.410.

Roman practices of metal production including ore selection and the use of coal are shown to have continued. Production/working of iron only declined slightly in the early to mid-fifth century before a continuous rise until the mid-sixth century. This argues against previous suggestions that total economic collapse followed the withdrawal of the Roman empire. Instead, a more nuanced narrative of 'islands' of surviving metal-producing communities is suggested, providing a new post-Roman economic narrative for northern England.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b
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River Ure
Little Bridge Lane
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2018
borehole
48 borehole ID
2020 ARTP excavations
Magnetometry interpretation
negative anomalies
positive anomalies
dipolar anomalies
0
150
300m

R FERRABY/M.J. MILLETT

Above: a) Plan showing features detected by geophysical survey and the location of boreholes and excavations undertaken at Aldborough; b) the Roman metal-working complex under excavation in 2021

Aldborough and the metals economy of northern England, c. AD 345–1700: a new post-Roman narrative by Christopher Loveluck (University of Nottingham) et al

SAYER ET AL [4]

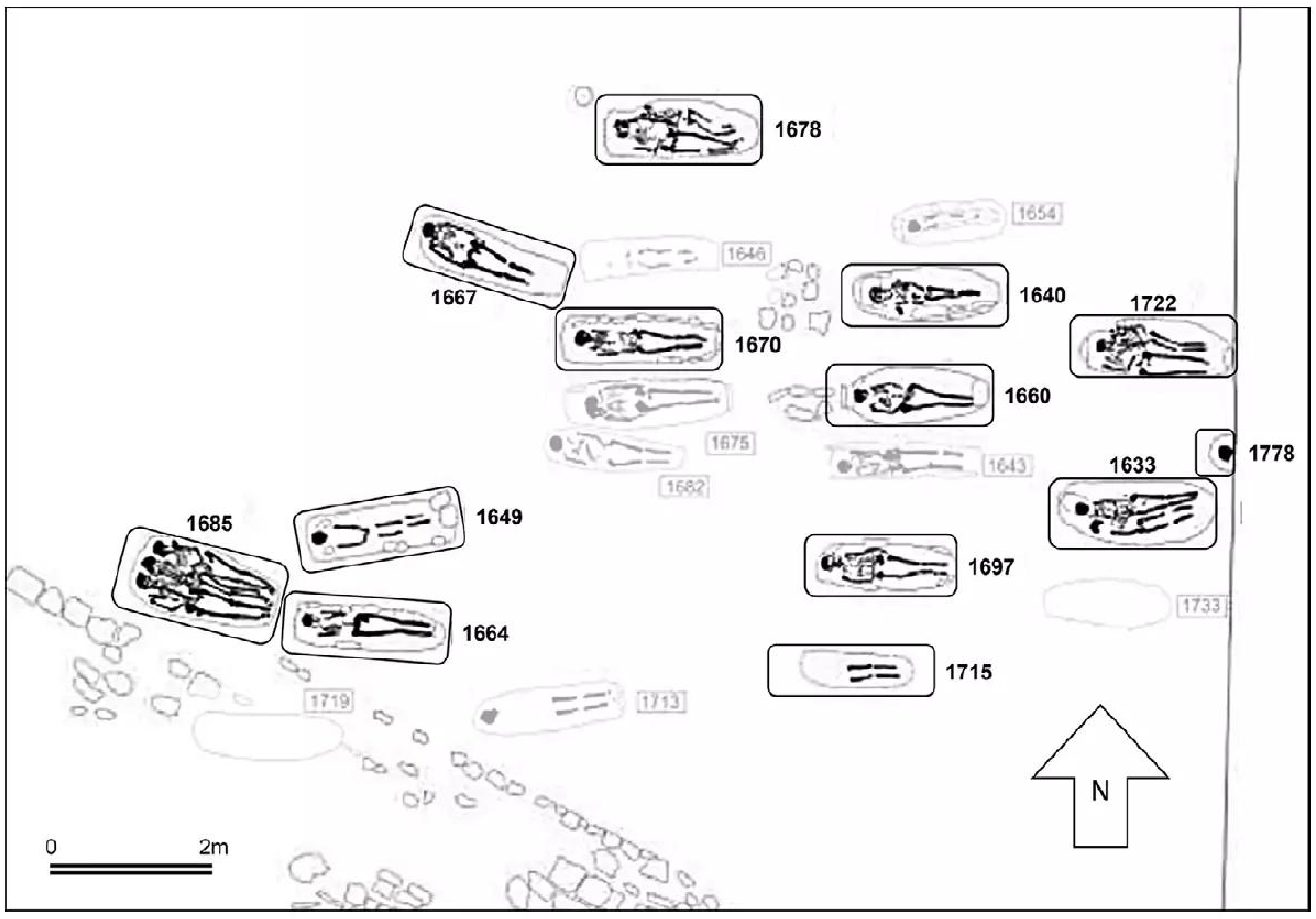
Migration, and its directions, scale, and impact, are much debated in European archaeology, especially in relation to cultural change in the Early Middle Ages. Archaeogenetic research provides new insight, revealing direct kinship between individuals within cemeteries and, in combination with stable isotope analysis, identifying individual migrants and their lifeways.

In collaboration with Foody et al (see page 14), a recent study has focused on two individuals buried in seventh-century graves near the south coast of England: at Updown, Kent, and at Worth Matravers, Dorset. Both individuals had recent ancestors in sub-Saharan West Africa.

Areas of the early Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Updown, near Eastry in Kent, were excavated in advance of development in the 1970s and 80s. In all, 78 inhumation burials were uncovered, primarily from the seventh century AD.

The grave goods from Updown comprise dress accessories, weaponry, and personal accessories, including objects imported from the Frankish continent and an unusual Byzantine buckle, antique when buried. Updown belongs to a cluster of cemeteries in East Kent and is only a few kilometres from the large Anglo-Saxon cemetery site at Finglesham. The place name recorded in early ninth-century charters identifies Eastry as an administrative division, and wider historical evidence indicates that it was a royal centre as early as the sixth century.

The ancient DNA (aDNA) of six individuals from Updown has been analysed. Grave 47 was found to contain a female who died around the age of 11–13. The maternal lineage of this individual represents mitochondrial DNA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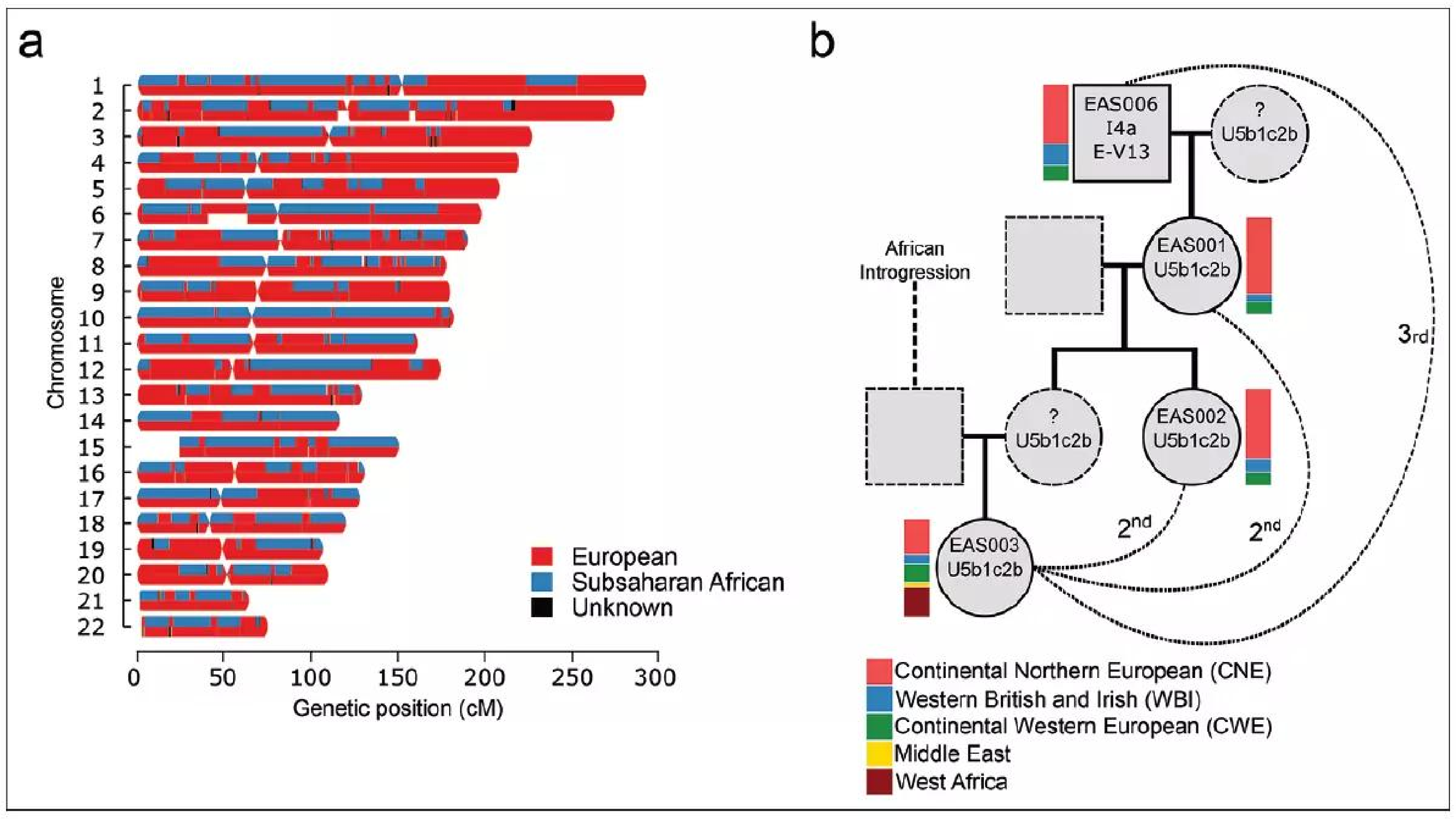
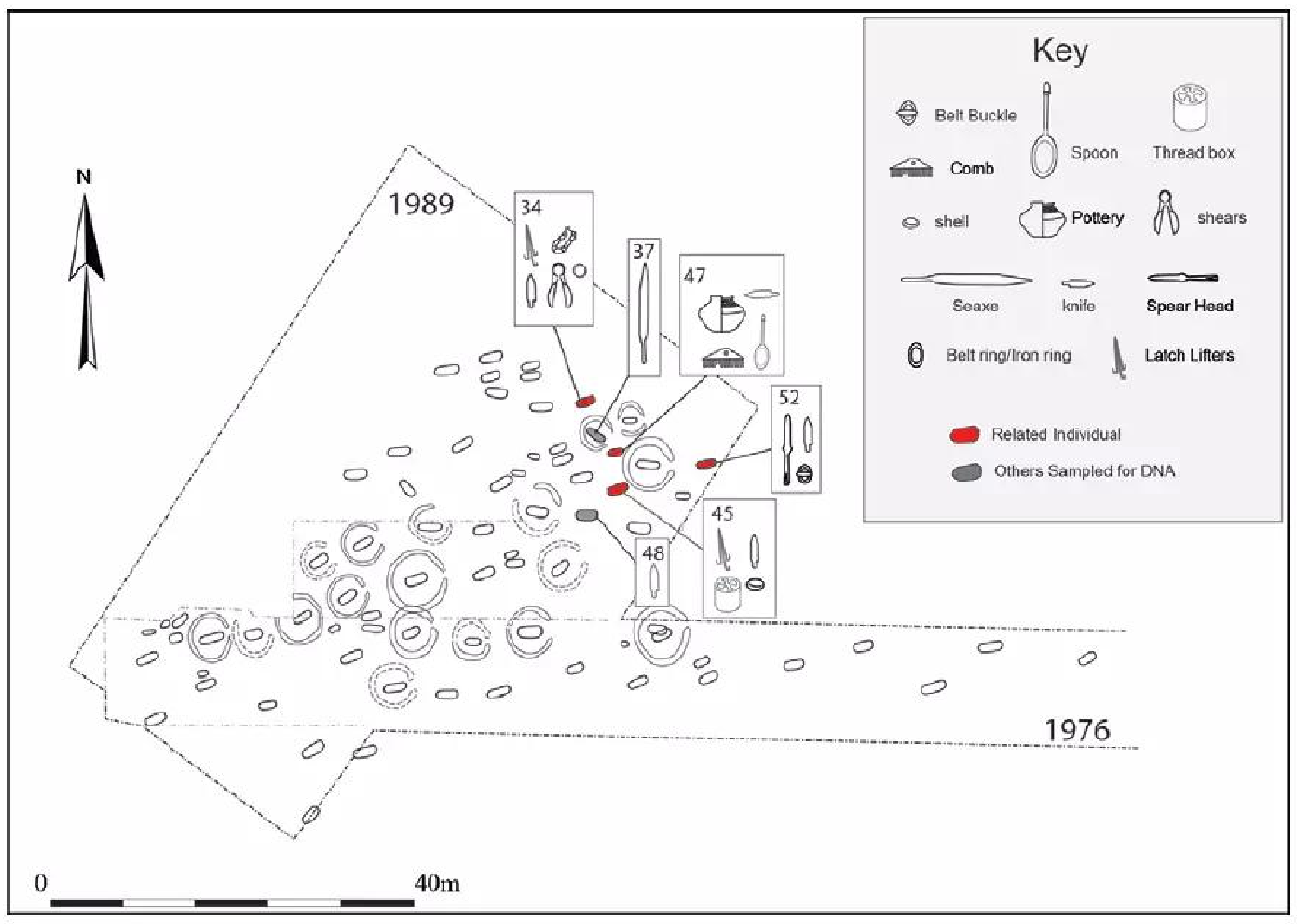
Above: The cemetery at Worth Matravers, Dorset, showing the burials sampled for aDNA in bold



Above: Genetic family history of EAS003: a) Karyogram visualisation of the length and distribution of admixture tracts across the EAS003 genome as inferred using RFMix. b) reconstructed pedigree of EAS003. Males are depicted as squares, females as circles. Y chromosome and mtDNA haplogroups are reported. The results of a supervised admixture at K=12 is shown next to the corresponding individual


Key
Belt Buckle
Spoon
Thread box
Comb
shell
Pottery
shears
Seaxe
knife
Spear Head
Belt ring/Iron ring
Latch Lifters
Related Individual
Others Sampled for DNA
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48
1976
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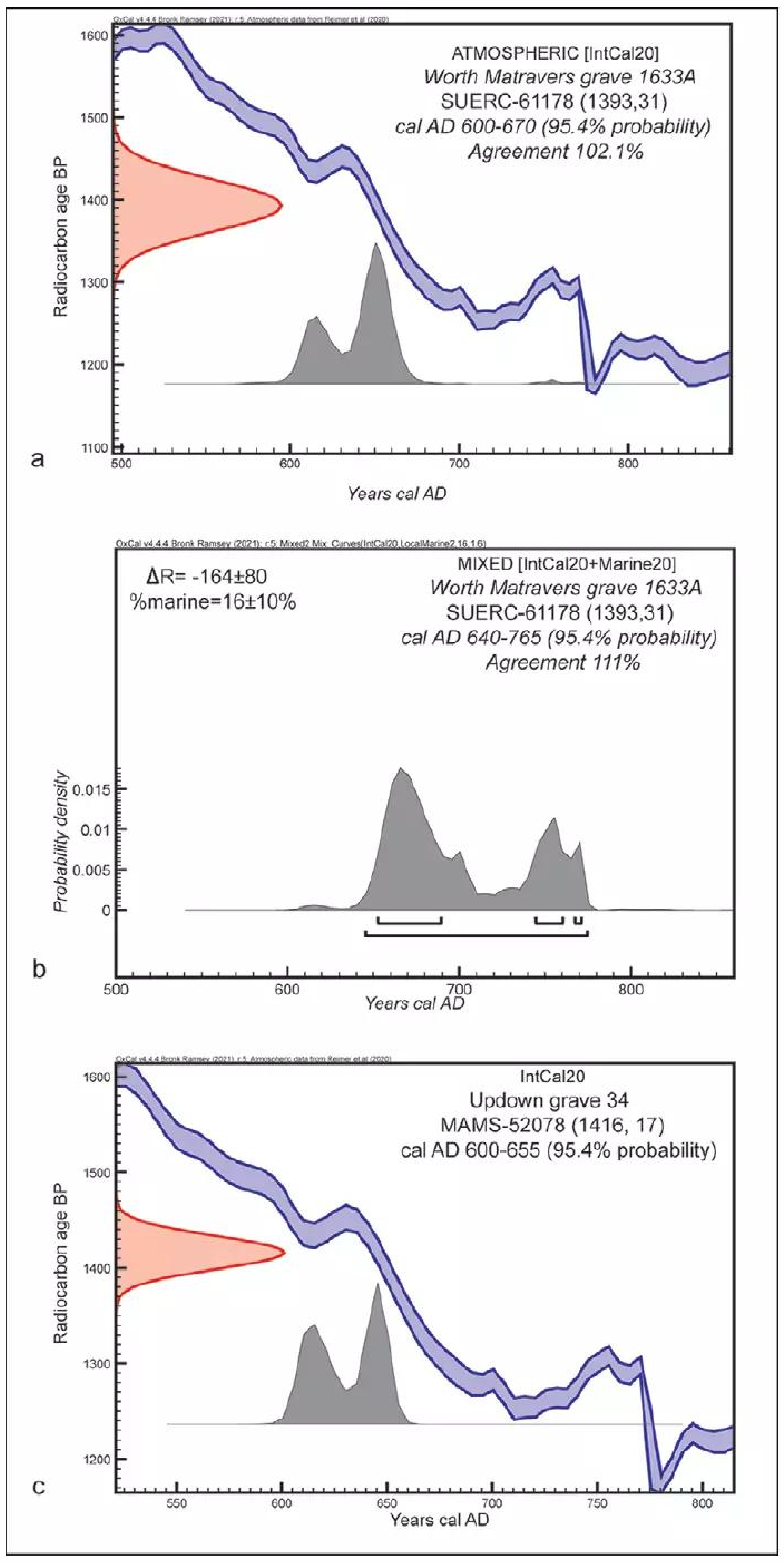
Above: The excavated graves at Updown, Kent, showing the burials sampled for aDNA



Above: Radiocarbon dating evidence for Worth Matravers grave 1633A using atmospheric (a) and mixed (b) calibration curves, and for Updown grave 34 (c)

which is common in northern Europe. However her autosomal DNA shows clear signals of non-European ancestry. This is similar to the findings for the male individual found at Worth Matravers. Both individuals show genetically and geographically mixed descent, with an estimated 20–40 per cent ancestry characteristic of sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, early-medieval individuals with West African ancestry are identified both in a part of Britain directly affected by the 'Anglo-Saxon' migration and in a community characterised by genetic continuity through the Roman period from the Iron Age

The male at Worth Matravers has not had any biological relations identified within the same cemetery, but at Updown it appears that the female's aunt, grandmother, and great-grandfather were also buried. None of these relatives show genetic characteristics of sub-Saharan African ancestry, although the possible great-grandfather had Y chromosomes more characteristic of southern Italy, the Balkans, and Greece than Northern Europe.

It is suggested that the sub-Saharan African ancestry came to the young female through her paternal line, from which no known relatives were found at Updown. However, patrilineal identity was important socially. The inclusion of Updown girl within her community and its customs strongly implies that her father, and potentially the deeper paternal line, was known to that community. She was buried with a knife, a spoon, a bone comb and a decorated pot. The biconical pot, placed near her feet, was a fine, wheel-turned product.

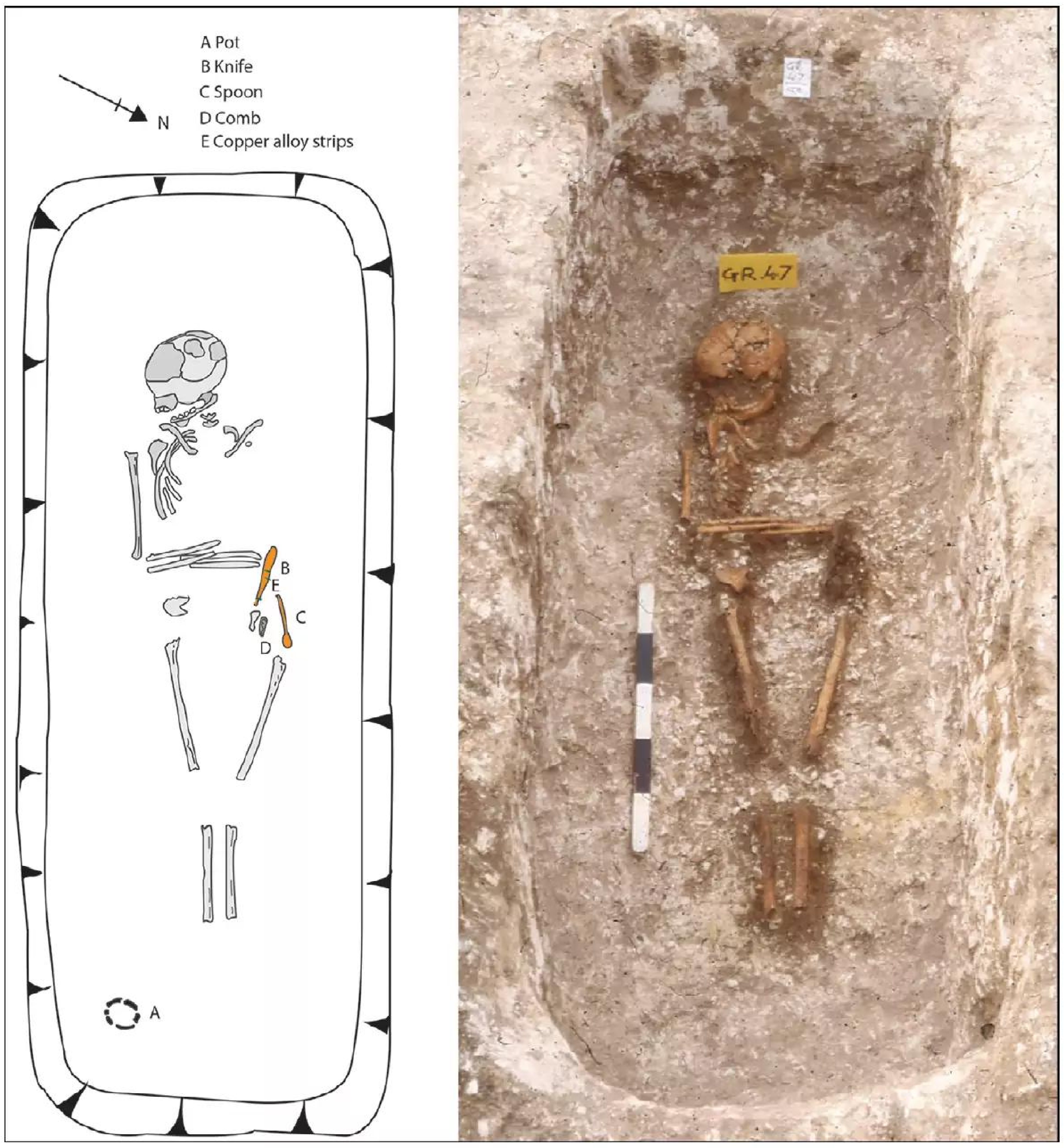
Comparable vessels are familiar in contemporary Kentish cemeteries and most were imported from Frankish Gaul. The incised interlaced decoration in bands around the body of this pot is, however, unparalleled and this could be one of the few specimens for which local manufacture seems possible. Spoons could also be used as pendants or amulets, while combs, occur regularly in early Anglo-Saxon female inhumations.

The transformation of physical appearance was important in many prehistoric African bodily presentations, while grooming, and rituals involving combs, may suggest these items held amuletic and ritual properties. The eclectic assemblage of artefacts that she was buried with embodies wide sources of influence, like her ancestry. Archaeologically, this individual grave tells subtly of experience among the better-off, alongside a royal centre. The discovery of sub-Saharan ancestry for these two individuals contributes to our understanding of extensive economic and political relationships through and around the Mediterranean in the sixth and seventh centuries.

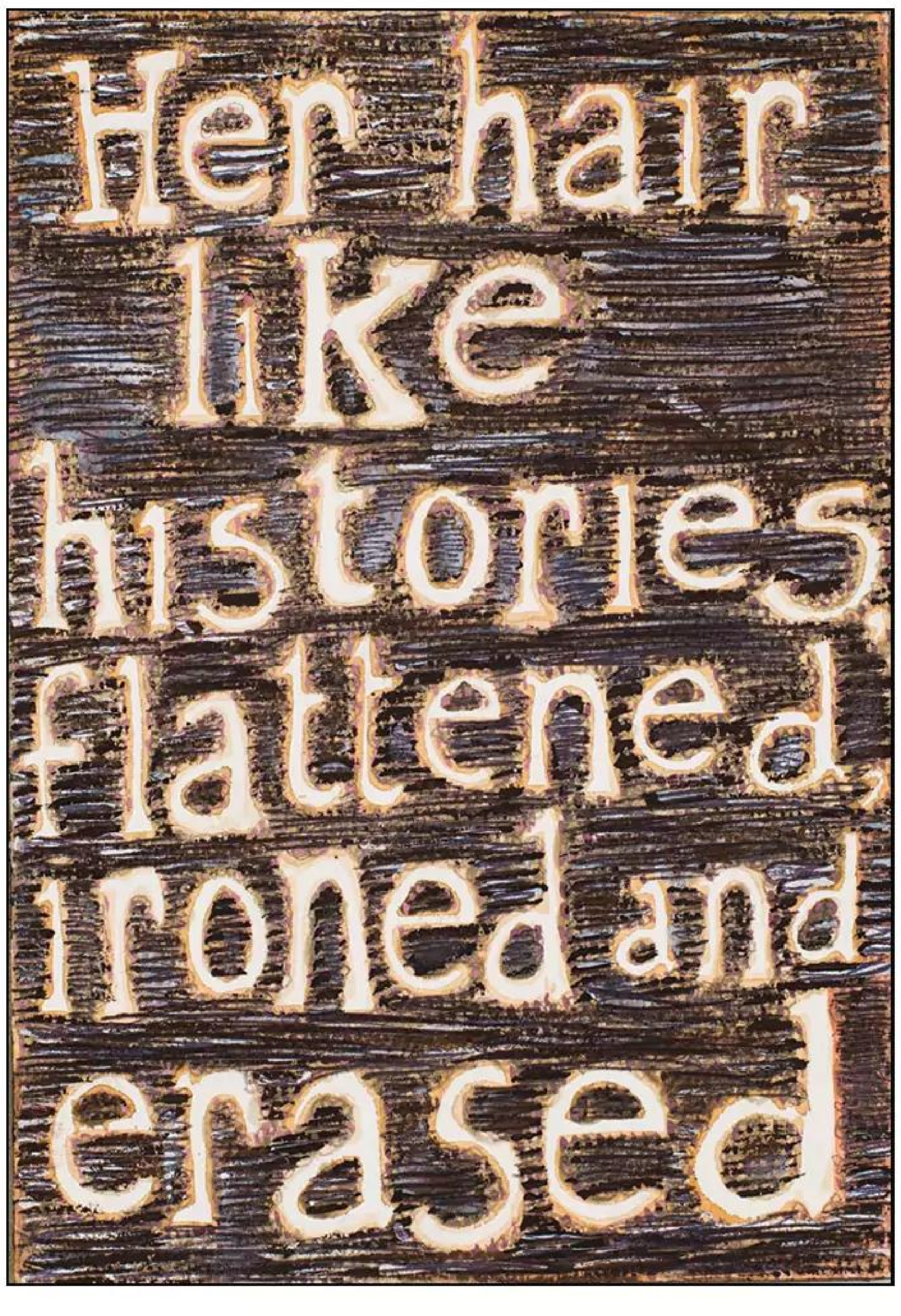
Counting two to four generations, of about 25 years, back from the mid-seventh century implies that the genetically part-African individuals buried at Updown and Worth Matravers were descended from ancestors who probably left the southern Sahel between the mid-sixth and the early seventh centuries. This points to the period of Byzantine control of North Africa. By the late sixth and seventh centuries, Byzantine cultural pre-eminence was highly influential, even in distant England. Textual and artefactual evidence supports this.

Kent has always been a conduit for influence from the adjacent continent. This new genetic evidence adds to our understanding of migration and connectivity more broadly in the early medieval period.

West African ancestry in seventh-century England: two individuals from Kent and Dorset by Duncan Sayer (University of Lancashire) et al



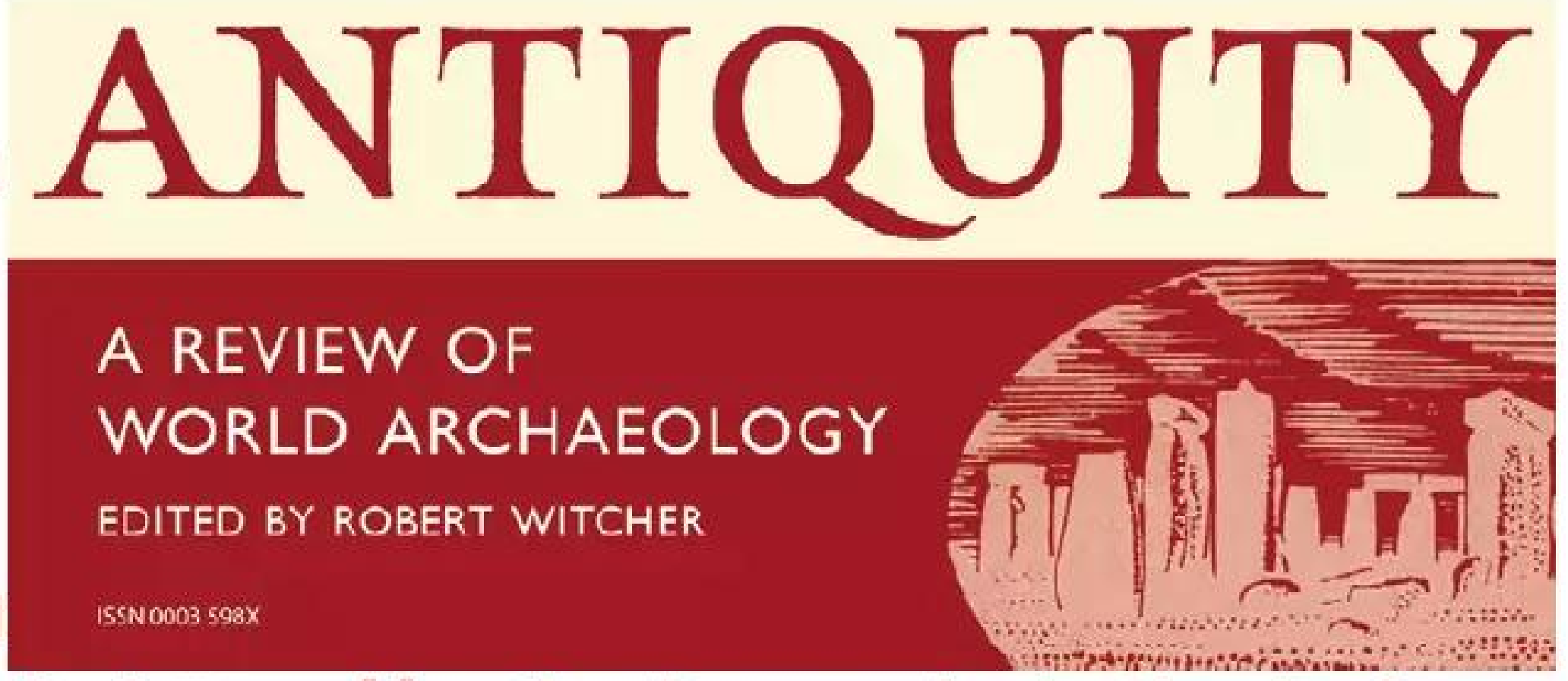
SAYER ET AL


Her hair like histories flattened, ironed and erased

Above: Grave 47 at Updown: photograph and adjacent grave plan showing the positioning of the body and grave goods

Left: Jade Montserrat, Her hair like histories, flattened, ironed and erased. Watercolour, gouache, pencil, and crayon: 2016

GOVERNMENT ART COLLECTION; JADE MONTSERRAT. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED, DACS 2023



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From fortress to field

VIANOVA/UCL

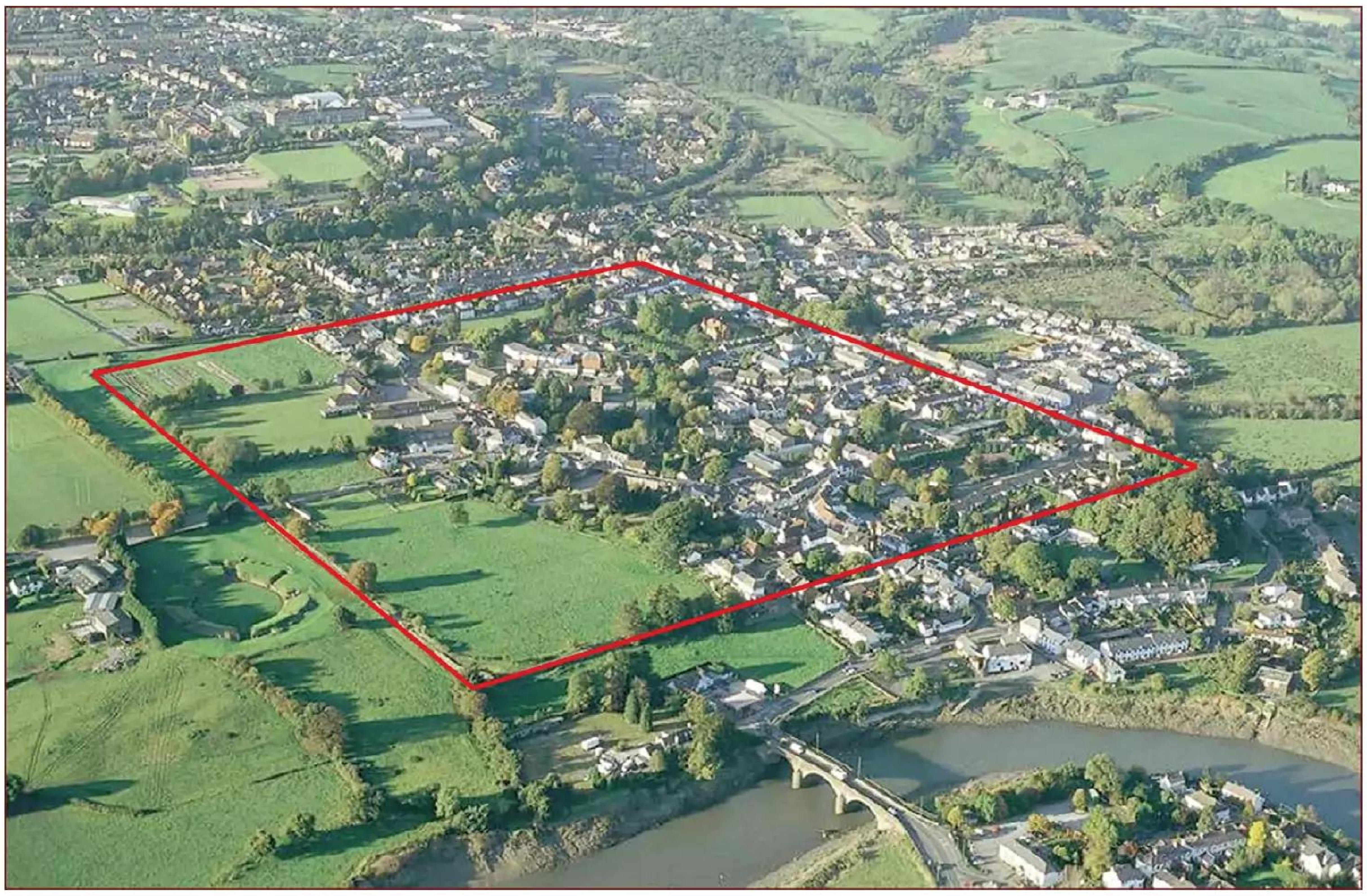
Uncovering Caerleon's Roman past

Almost 2,000 years ago, Caerleon in southeast Wales was the site of a Roman fortress and the base of the Second Augustan Legion.

Excavations in Priory Field between 2007 and 2010 investigated a large masonry courtyard store building, which produced groundbreaking new evidence for Caerleon's rich Roman history, including some exceptional finds.

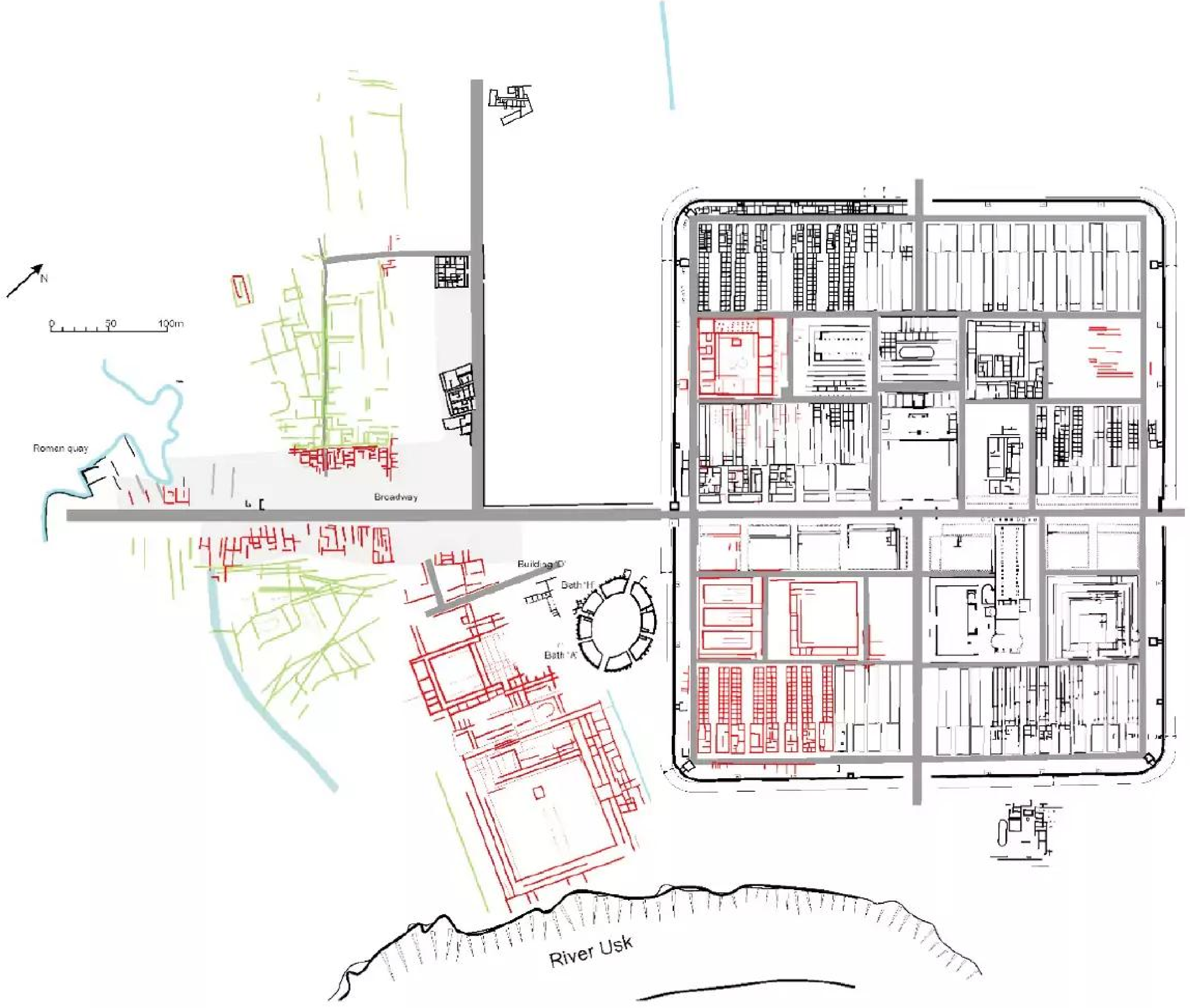
Peter Guest and Andrew Gardner detail what the team discovered, describing when Priory Field's courtyard building was built, what was stored in it, when it ceased to be used, and what happened to it during and after the later Roman period.

From Isca to Caerleon



RCAHMW

***Above:* Aerial photograph of Caerleon, showing the outline of the legionary fortress**



GEOARCH

***Right:* Plan of Isca and the newly discovered extramural settlement to the southwest. Buildings in red were discovered during the 'Mapping Isca' geophysical survey project**

Lying on the lower reaches of the River Usk, the town of Caerleon sits on top of the remains of one of only three permanent legionary fortresses in Britain (the others are at Chester and York). Caerleon's Roman origins have never been forgotten and the town's name itself is an echo of its ancient heritage: Caer is a Welsh word derived from the Latin *castra*, meaning 'fortification' or 'camp', while Leon comes from *legio*, or 'legion'. Therefore, Caerleon means 'Fortress of the legion' and the name is an early post-Roman memory that this place had been the headquarters of the Second Augustan Legion for over 200 years.

Caerleon is called Isca, or Isca Augusta, in the surviving copies of Roman maps and itineraries; Isca meaning 'water' in the language of the native Britons, presumably derived from the adjoining River Usk (whose name also comes from the same ancient linguistic root – Afon Wsyg in modern Welsh).

Some two-thirds of the interior of the Roman fortress lie below the roads, buildings, and gardens of Caerleon, while the rest of the fortress extends beneath the open spaces southwest of the current built-up area, beyond which was a large extramural settlement, including the amphitheatre, a port, and a complex of public buildings. These fields have not been occupied since the Roman period, which means the archaeological remains buried there are often relatively undisturbed.

Caerleon was widely known during the medieval period as the location of a shrine to two early Christian martyrs, Julius and Aaron (believed to have been serving soldiers, martyred for their faith in the same persecution as St Alban of Verulamium), and the site of one of mythical King Arthur's courts.

Writing in the twelfth century, Geoffrey of Monmouth expressed his astonishment at some of the still-standing remains at Caerleon: 'so fine were its royal palaces that the gold that decked their roofs reminded one of Rome'. By the sixteenth century, however, the town was increasingly recognised for its Roman past and, from this time, antiquarians such as William Camden, Edward Llwyd and William Stukeley began recording inscriptions and mosaics from Caerleon.

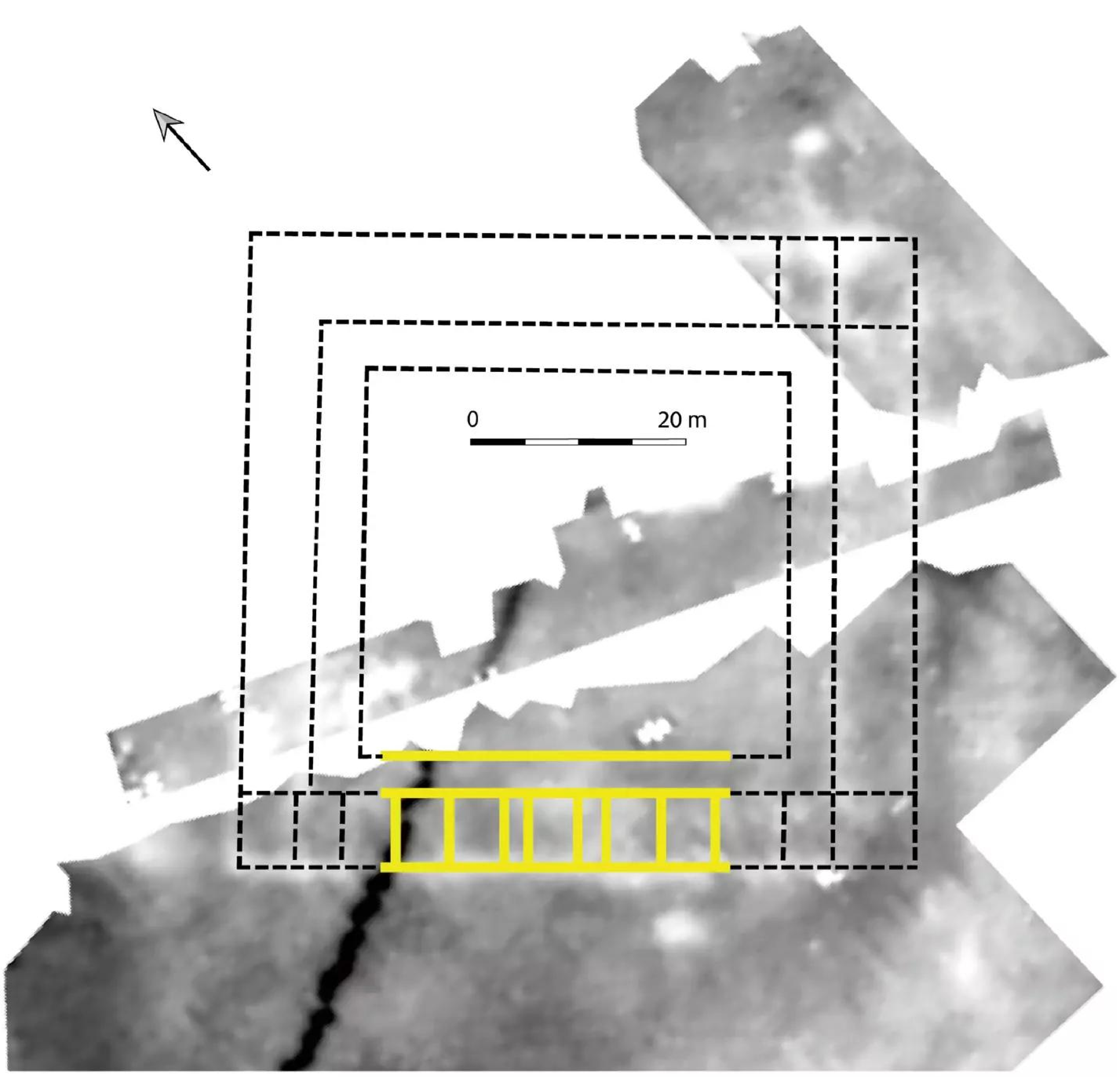
More systematic exploration and recording of the Roman remains unearthed in the rapidly expanding town began when John Edward Lee moved to The Priory on the High Street in 1841. Lee was a Newport industrialist with a passion for the past and he encouraged like-minded local philanthropists to form the Caerleon Antiquarian Association in 1847, with a view to raising funds to build a museum at Caerleon 'to save from the destroying hand of time the valuable relics of bygone days', as well as to 'enlighten the intellect', 'cultivate the pursuit of liberal studies', and 'inspire the spirit of enquiry'.

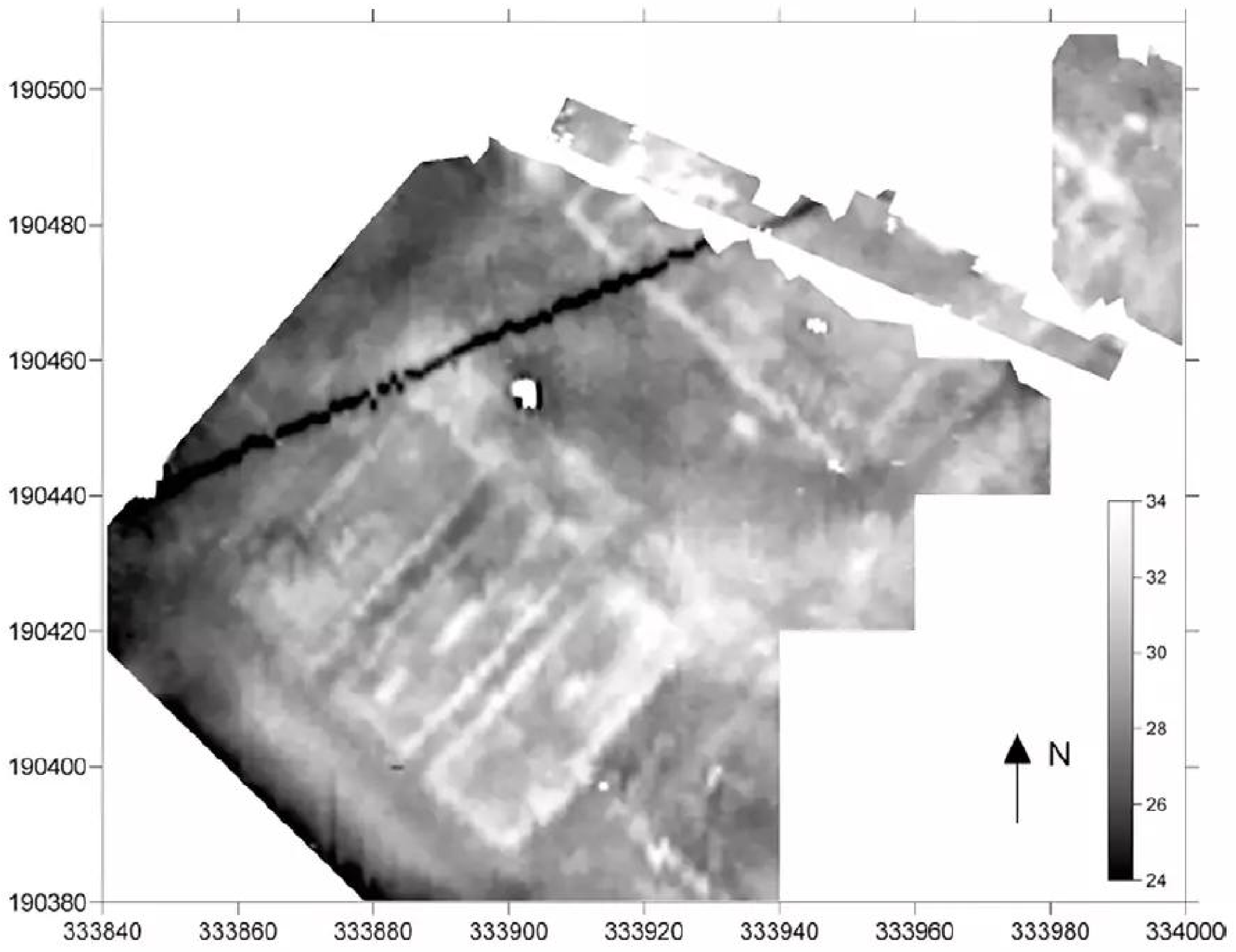
The Antiquarian Museum, only the second to be founded in Wales, opened its doors in 1850 and Lee published its first catalogue of Roman artefacts in 1862 (the museum was later taken over by the National Museum of Wales and rebuilt in 1987).

Although the earliest antiquarian investigations had taken place at Caerleon as early as 1843 (of the extramural baths), recognisably modern archaeological excavation arrived in Caerleon in the 1920s, brought by R.E. Mortimer Wheeler, keeper of archaeology and later director at the National Museum of Wales. Wheeler began the systematic exploration of the fortress and he, with his wife Tessa Verney Wheeler,

***Opposite page:* Carved stone relief, possibly depicting the upper part of a triton**

GEOARCH [2]





Top: Resistivity survey results showing the reconstructed plan of the store building – excavated part of the front range in yellow

Above: Resistivity results for the northern part of Priory Field

famously excavated the remains of the amphitheatre in 1926-27.

The Caerleon Excavation Committee, specially formed in recognition of the international significance of the Roman fortress's remains, continued the Wheelers' work and, apart from the Second World War, excavations regularly took place in Caerleon up to the 1970s, mostly in response to the expansion of the town beyond its medieval core along the High Street. In this way, large areas within Caerleon were investigated, revealing the plans of numerous military buildings, as well as the fortress' history.

The number of threat-led excavations in Caerleon decreased from the 1980s as the remaining open spaces were filled or protected, and the focus of development moved outside the town beyond the Roman fortress. Noteworthy sites include the Iron Age hillfort and cemetery at Lodge Hill, the civilian settlement at Mill Street, as well as other cemeteries at Ultra Pontem and Abernant. Work in the lead up to the Ryder Cup tournament at the Celtic Manor Resort in 2010 added important new information about the Roman settlement at Great Bulmore, and the pottery kilns on the slopes above it.

In 2001, Cadw initiated the 'Research Framework for the Archaeology of Wales'. Caerleon and its environs were highlighted as particularly important for the study of the Roman period in Wales and the national framework recommended that Caerleon deserved its own review. This was completed in 2005 as 'The Roman fortress at Caerleon and its environs: a framework for research', which set out what was known about the site and its inhabitants as well as, crucially, what was not yet known.

Following the recommendations for further work in these research frameworks, Cardiff University and GeoArch organised several geophysical surveys in and around the fortress (collectively known as the Mapping Isca project), that provided significant new information about numerous buildings buried beneath the ground.

Both magnetometry and resistivity were employed and the surveys, undertaken between 2006 and 2011, covered an area of approximately 20 hectares, locating 12 previously unknown military buildings in Priory Field in the southern quarter of the fortress (including barracks, three military granaries, and a large store building), as well as a large metalworking fabrica (workshop) in School Field, and a suburb of monumental public buildings and riverside wharves to the south of the fortress, between the amphitheatre and the River Usk.

The fortress of Isca

Isca is one of the most well-known imperial legionary fortresses from anywhere in the Roman Empire. A century of archaeological work at Caerleon has resulted in an unparalleled understanding of the site, its history, and its garrison; Isca has become a type-site for the study of Roman fortresses.

Isca was probably first established during the campaigns from 73/74 to 77 led by Sextus Julius Frontinus, governor of Roman Britain, against the native tribes in modern-day Wales. The tribe in southeastern Wales was known to the invaders as the Silures, who first came into contact with the Roman army as early as 48, only five years after the invasion of Britain.

The years from 48 to 73/4 witnessed intermittent warfare between Roman forces and the Welsh tribes and, despite determined resistance on the part of the Britons, the Romans nevertheless were able to push deep into Silurian territory by advancing westwards along the south coast, as well as into the hilly interior of Wales by means of the Wye and Usk river valleys.

The Roman writer Tacitus describes how 'on the Silures neither terror nor

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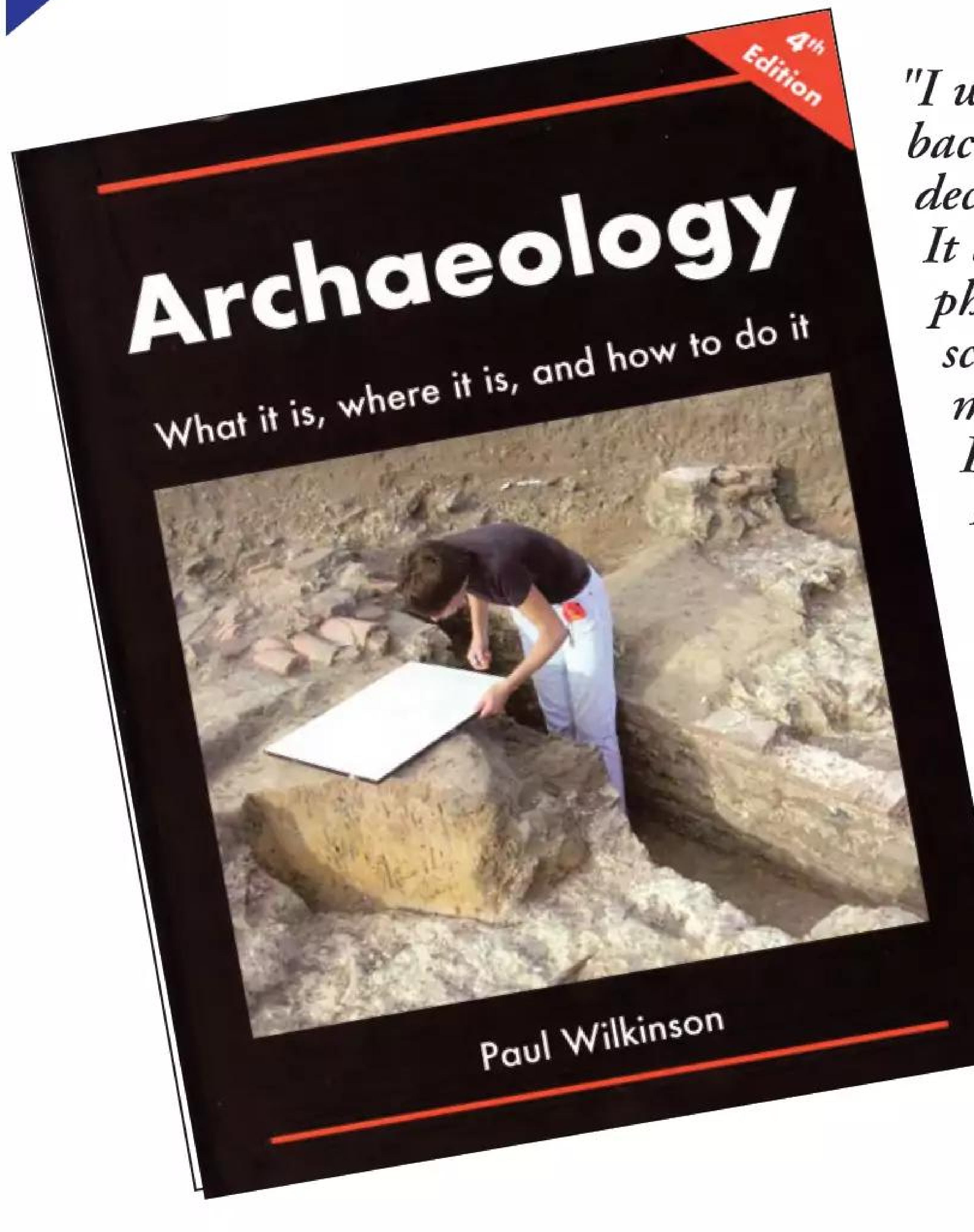
Mick Aston



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mercy had the least effect; they persisted in war and could be quelled only by legions encamped in their country'; their resistance was crushed finally by 77. Although it is unclear whether Isca was constructed during the Frontinian campaign or once the fighting was over, 74 or 75 are most commonly given for the fortress's foundation.

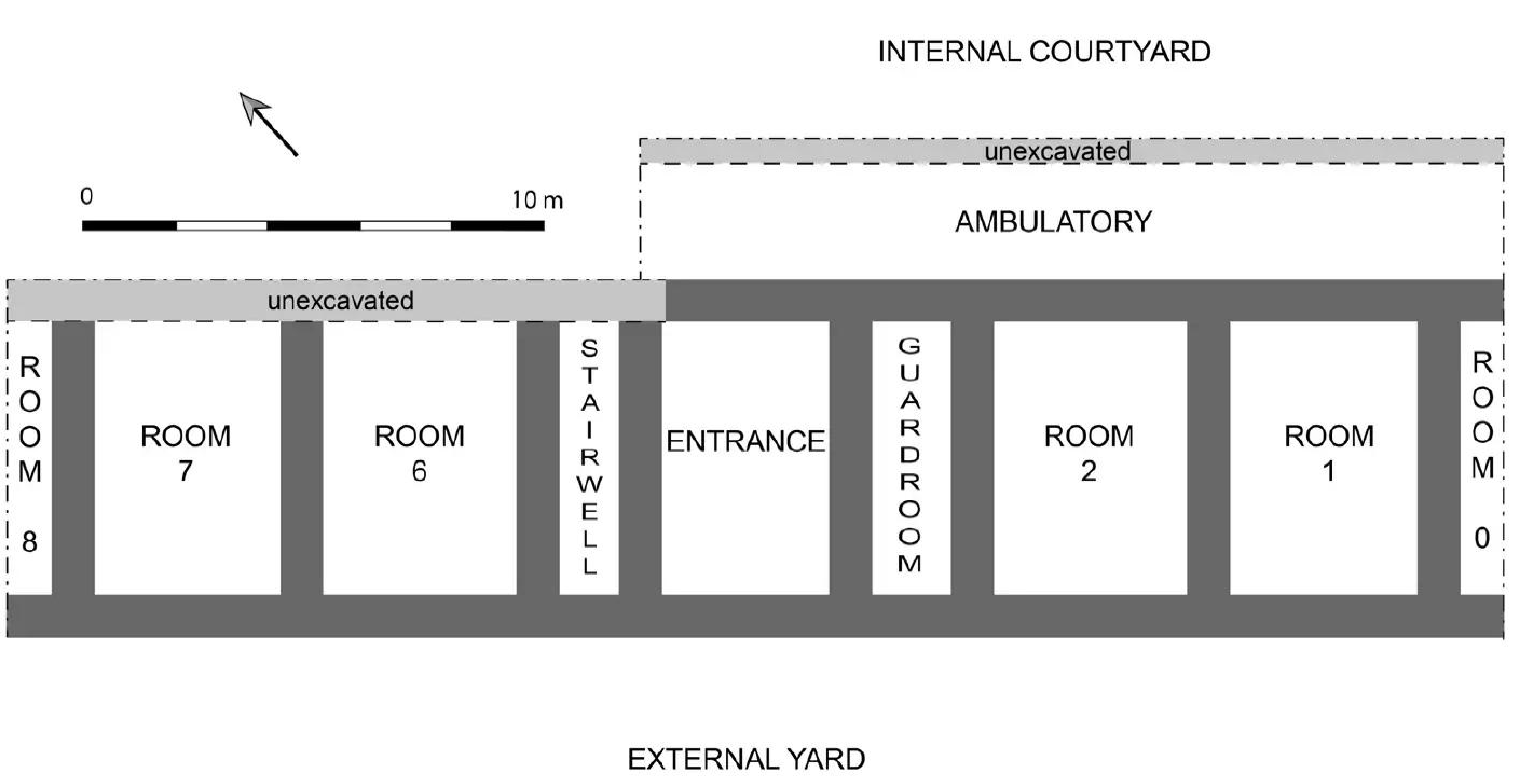
The legion based at Isca was Legio Secunda Augusta (the Second Augustan Legion), which had been part of the invasion force in 43 and had probably moved to Caerleon from Exeter. Legions consisted of about 5,500 men, all of whom were Roman citizens and professional soldiers.

The legionary's training, equipment, and his loyalty to the Emperor made him a formidable opponent in battle, although being heavily armed was a disadvantage in hilly Wales where the lighter auxiliaries, particularly cavalry, most likely would have borne the brunt of the initial campaigning.

In order to accommodate a full and self-sufficient legion in recently conquered territory, legionary fortresses were very large military installations containing buildings designed to perform a range of functions. Isca was rectangular in plan with rounded corners (the typical 'playing-card' shape of early imperial military fortifications) and covered an area of some 20.5 hectares.

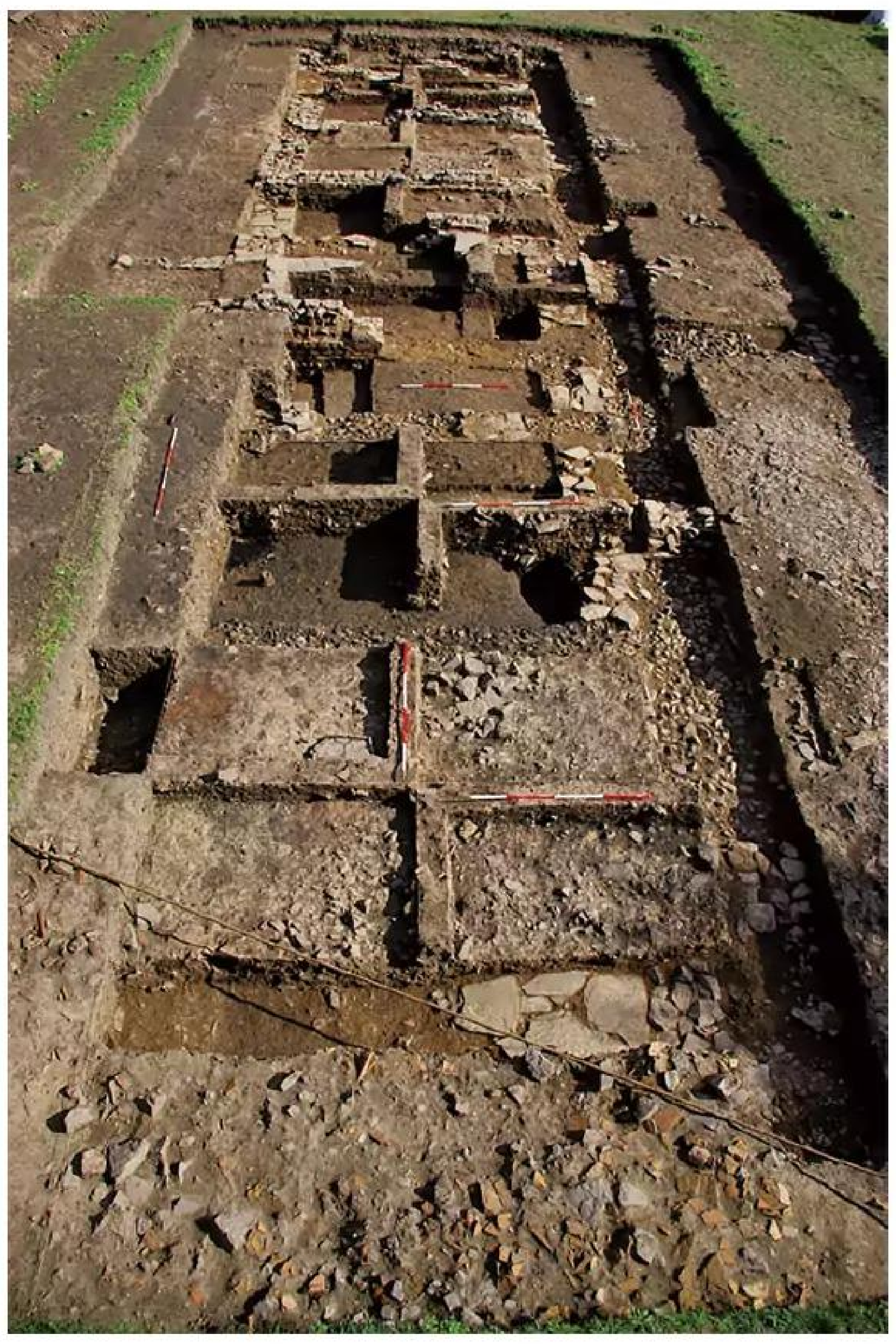
Fortresses of this period followed a predetermined layout, although differences between them reveal each to be local variations on an overall theme. The interior of Isca shows that its construction had been carefully planned, based on an orthogonal street-grid and the orderly arrangement of buildings of specific functions grouped together in zones.

It is important to bear in mind that the current understanding of the layout of Isca is often based on fragmentary evidence and that the plans of some of the buildings are very incomplete. Moreover, the internal arrangement of the fortress describes the situation after the decision had been taken to make Isca the permanent base of the Second Augustan Legion, which resulted in many of its buildings being rebuilt in stone. This is likely to have started at the end of the first century and the rebuilding work seems to have continued into the latter half of the second century. Prior to this, most of the fortress's internal buildings would have been constructed in timber, though it is only relatively recently that archaeologists have begun to identify the less solid remains of the fortress's earliest decades of occupation.

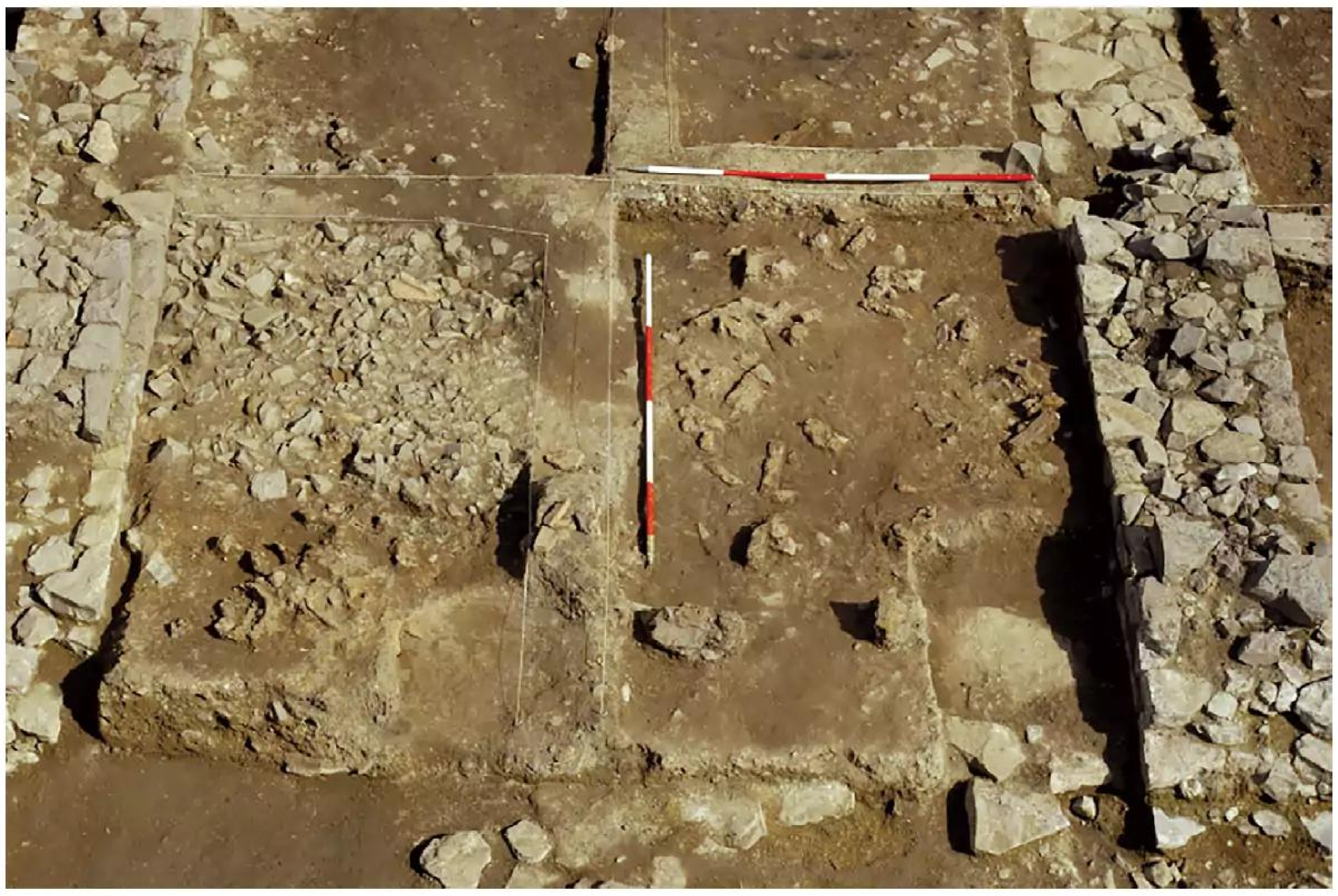


VIANOVA/UCL [3]

Top: Plan of the store building's excavated front range



Right: Excavation trench at the end of the 2010 season, from the north

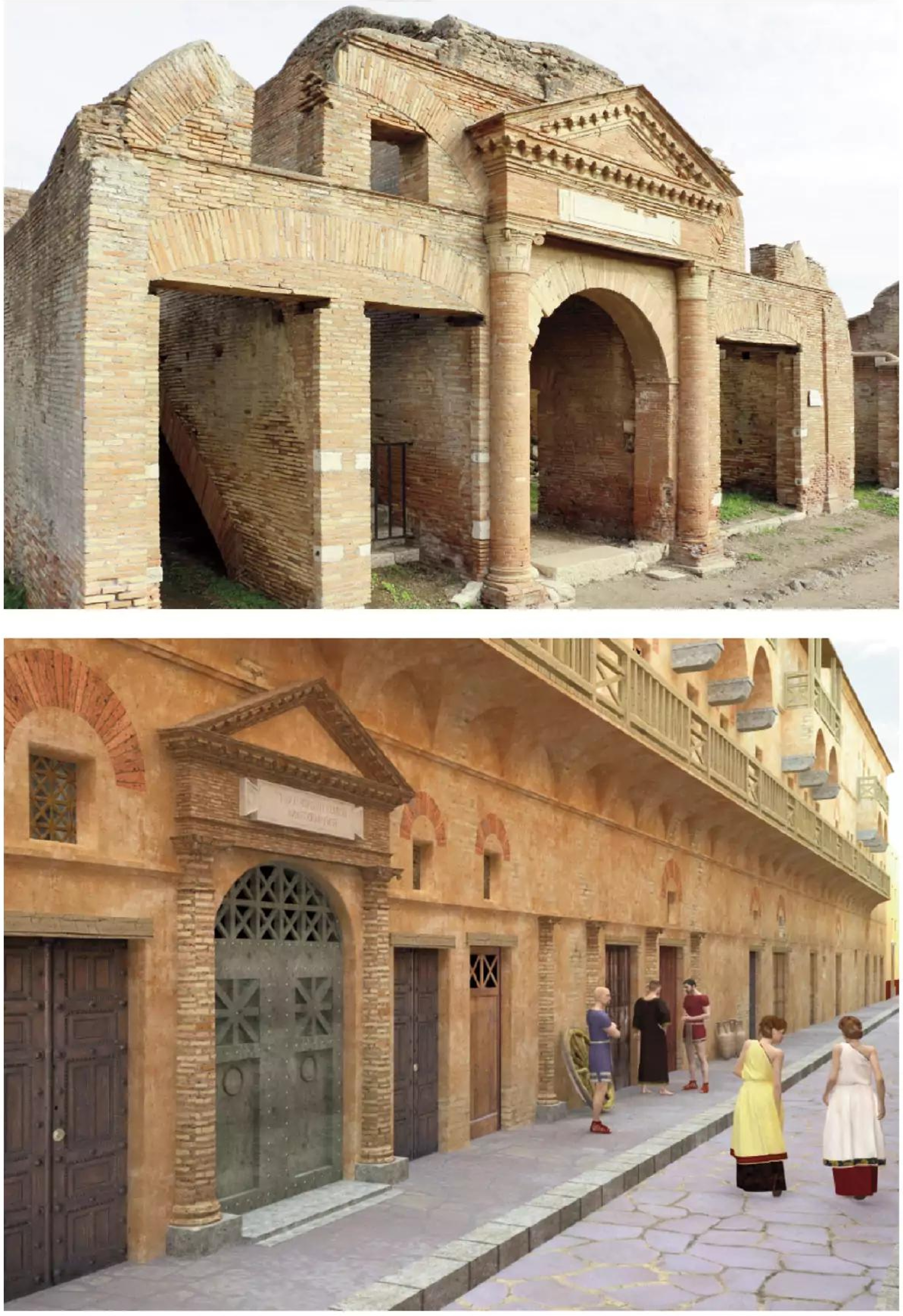


Right: Artefact scatter on the floor of Room 2, as excavated

The work to rebuild Isca in stone began before the emperor Hadrian's visit to Britannia in 122, which resulted in the planning and construction of Hadrian's Wall to mark the northern frontier of the province. Six cohorts of the Second Augustan Legion were involved in the building of Hadrian's Wall. For much of the second century a large proportion of the legion must have been semi-permanently absent from Caerleon as it built the Wall and its short-lived successor further north, the Antonine Wall.

A number of inscriptions from Caerleon reveal that several buildings in the fortress were renovated during the course of the third century, no doubt because many had been unoccupied and disused for long periods of time.

The later history of the legionary fortress at Caerleon is less clear. It is thought that the Second Augustan Legion could have left Isca at some point around 300 to occupy the newly reconstructed fort on the lower River Taff at Cardiff. Excavations in Caerleon, however, have shown that occupation in some form continued throughout most of the fourth century, but whether these inhabitants were soldiers occupying a reduced footprint within the walls of the old fortress, or civilians who had moved into the abandoned military fortification, is uncertain.



Right: Photograph and reconstruction of the Horrea Epagathiana's (Ostia) façade

SAILKO. CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION 3.0 UNPORTED LICENCE

ANGELO COCCETTINI

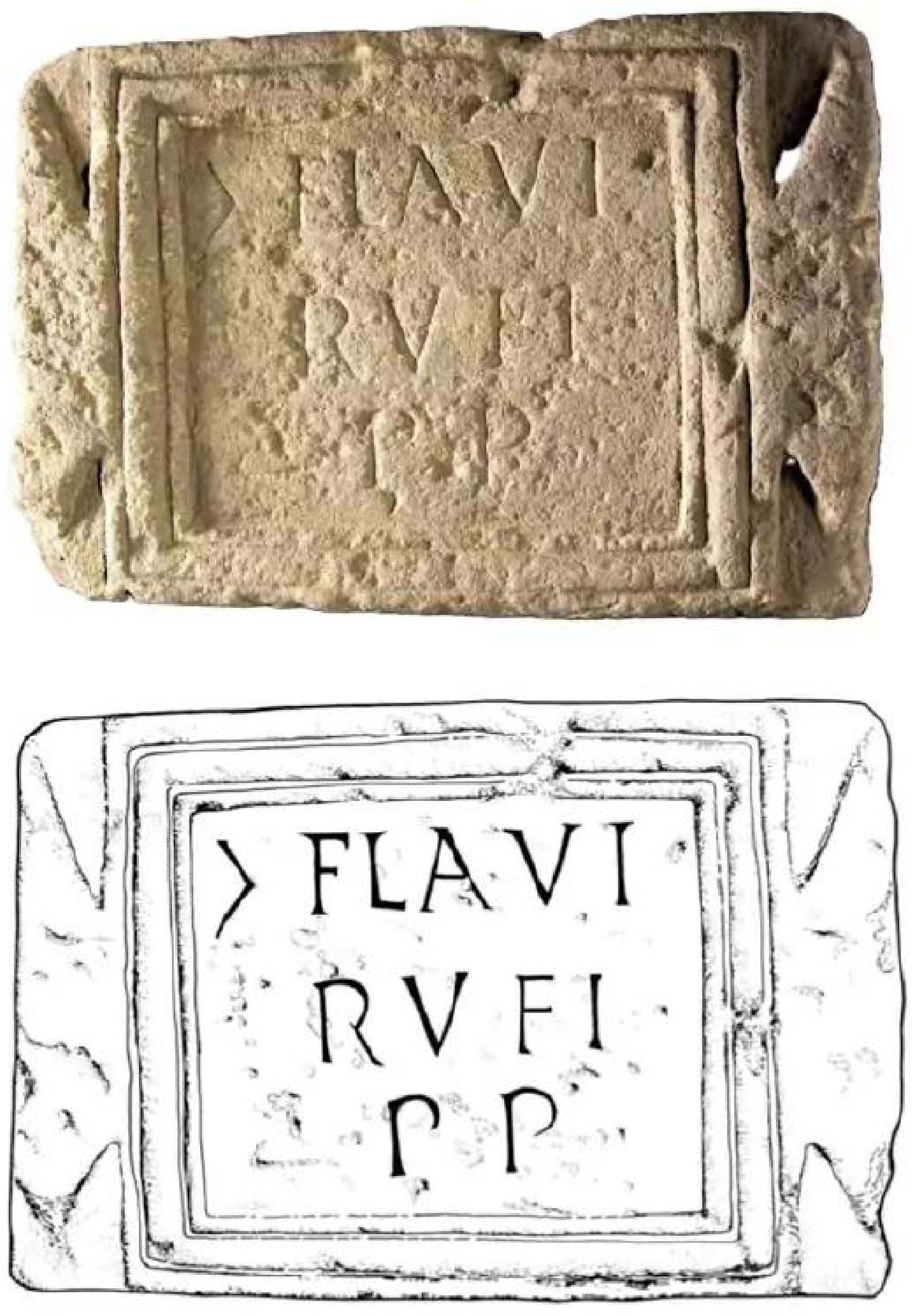
Excavating the Priory Field store building

The 2006 and 2007 geophysical surveys in Priory Field located part of a large courtyard building directly opposite three granaries close to the fortress's west gate. It was almost square in plan and covered an area of approximately 60 x 64m, while four ranges, at least two of which were subdivided into smaller rooms, and a covered (probably colonnaded) portico, enclosed the large central courtyard. The main entrance appears to have been located in the middle of the southwestern range, leading out onto a large open space between the building and the already mentioned granaries.

Following a preliminary evaluation season in 2007, a large trench was positioned over the courtyard building's southwestern range that was excavated over ten weeks in 2008 and 2010. About two-thirds of the range was investigated and the excavation exposed the building's main entranceway, its adjoining guard chamber, and a possible stairwell, four small square rooms with simple beaten-earth floors and white-washed plastered walls, as well as a length of the colonnaded portico around the courtyard.

Late- and post-Roman stone robbing had removed almost all of the store building's superstructure and, apart from a few short lengths of upstanding wall, only the solid foundations or the lowest wall courses survived. The front wall's foundations were twice as wide as those of the other walls, suggesting that the building's façade could have been several storeys high, in which case the portico might have supported a balcony for the upper floors, perhaps of timber, accessed via the stairwell next to the entranceway.

The building's plan and utilitarian architecture indicate that it served as the legion's main store, where items that were not required by their owners were kept until they might be needed again. Carts and other traffic passed into the building's courtyard on robust and durable surfaces in the entranceway and courtyard, from where military equipment and other goods would have been unloaded into the store rooms.



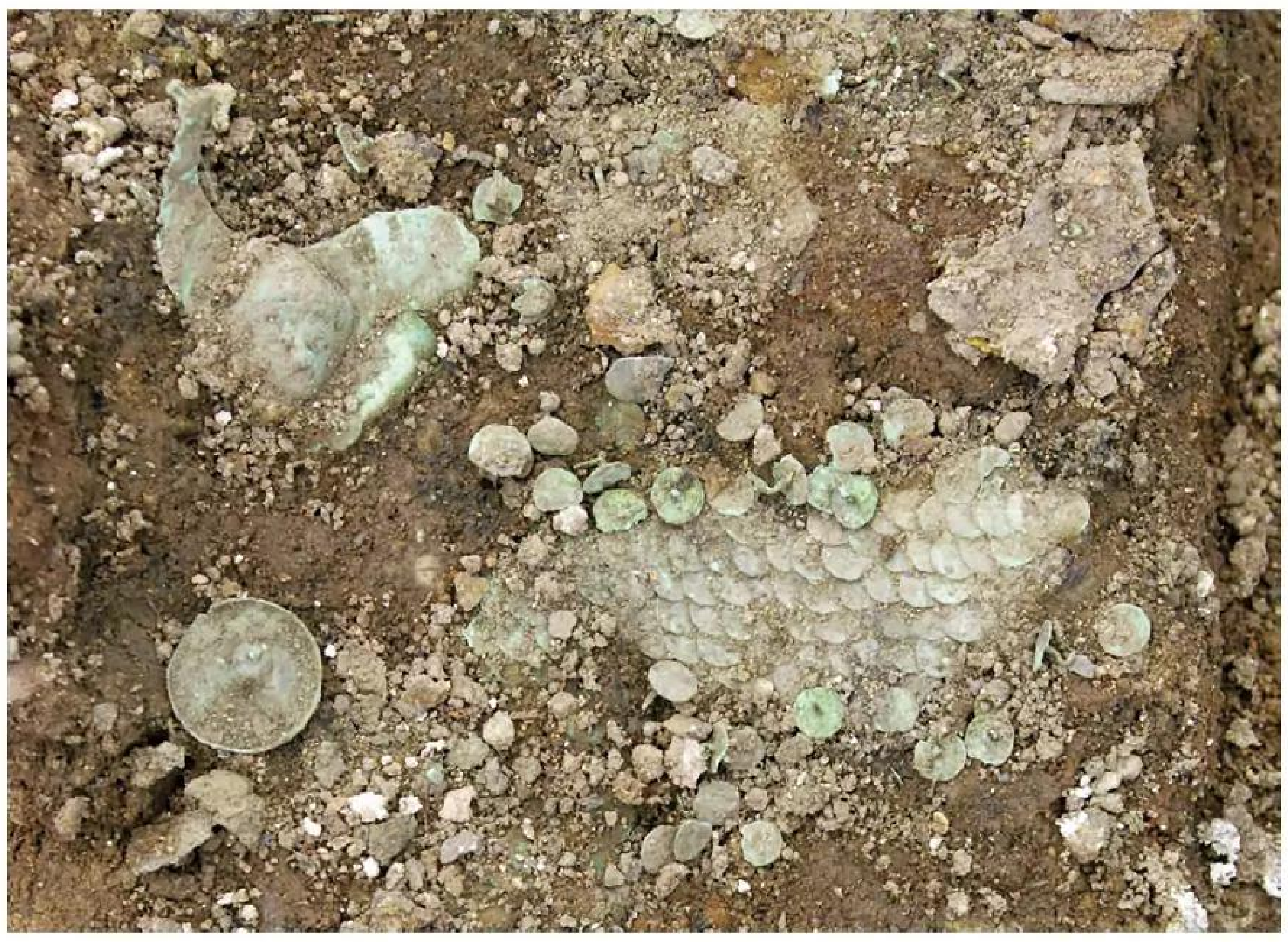
Right: The Flavius Rufus centurial stone

VIANOVA /UCL

The Priory Field building is reminiscent of storage buildings and warehouses from Rome and Ostia that Romans called *horrea*, which were often located on main or arterial roads close to the River Tiber. Roman *horrea* were very functional structures, characterised by thick walls, sometimes buttressed to emphasise strength and security, with narrow windows high up in their outer walls.

Although the Priory Field building was constructed in stone rather than brick, it also seems to have been an austere building where architectural decoration was limited to a carved roof cornice and frames around doors and windows, although two stones from the excavation suggest a decorated frieze of some kind above the entranceway.

AMGUEDDFA CYMRU – NATIONAL MUSEUM WALES



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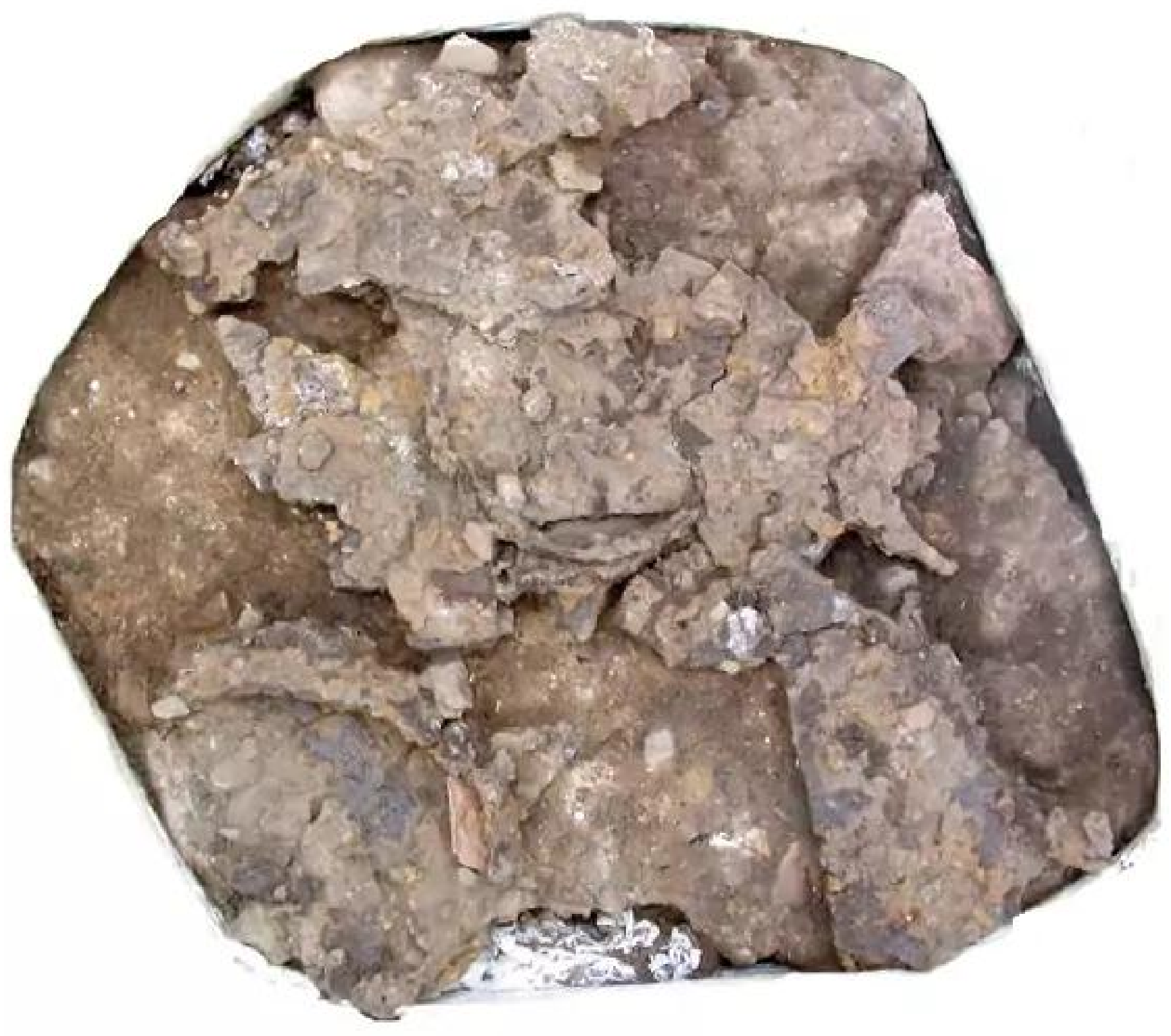


AMGUEDDFA CYMRU – NATIONAL MUSEUM WALES

Top: Julia Tubman, conservation intern, excavating Soil Block 3

Above: Detail of Soil Block 1 prior to lifting, containing elements of the decayed cavalry chamfron

Right: Soil Block 3 after laboratory excavation, showing the remains of iron-plate armour

The first of these is a 'centurial' stone and it records that men under the command of Flavius Rufus, the legion's primus pilus (senior centurion) built, or were responsible for the building of, the store. Rufus's name shows that he probably received Roman citizenship after his father had been honourably discharged from the auxiliaries during the reign of one of the Flavian emperors (Vespasian, Titus, or Domitian), most likely in the 70s when the Roman army was still fighting, or had just finished fighting against, the tribes in Wales.

The Rufus stone might have been positioned in the centre of a larger frieze that included the rather fine sandstone sculpted relief probably depicting a triton, or merman (part human and part fish).

After this was found in 2010, we wondered if it might portray a captive 'barbarian', like those shown on the famous Bridgeness and Hutcheson Hill 'distance slabs' from the Antonine Wall, where naked Britons are shown either being massacred or kneeling with their hands bound behind their backs, to either side of images and symbols of Roman victory.

However, as the University of Oxford's Professor Martin Henig points out in his authoritative report on this stone, our initial thoughts cannot be correct because the Roman army never depicted barbarians, either in combat or in defeat, with the kind of long-flowing hair worn by the figure on the Priory Field carving. Defeated barbarians would have suffered the fate of being sold into slavery after their capture, and Roman victory friezes consequently show them with short hair, probably after their heads had been shorn or shaved – a small but vivid example of the brutal treatment meted out to Rome's enemies, designed to eradicate their indigenous identities, and to humiliate and dehumanise them.

Although the lower part of the Priory Field sculpture is missing, based on its similarity with other representations from Roman Britain, Henig suggests the figure was a triton, in which case his lower legs would have ended with fish-like tails.

The excavation showed that the masonry store was the first building in this part of the fortress, while the coins and pottery indicate that it was constructed around 90-110 (Isca was founded c.75, so the plot must have lain empty for between 15 and 35 years).

The building remained in use throughout the second and third centuries before it was abandoned, probably during or just after the reign of the British usurper Carausius (283-93). After this, it fell into a derelict state until the excavated part of the range, including the superstructure above the entranceway, was partially demolished and levelled by around 350.

A Legion of finds

Broken tiles and bricks from the building's roof sealed the contents of two store rooms, one of which seems to have been used to keep household and personal items, including furniture, glass bottles, and jugs, as well as brooches, a finger ring, and a mirror fragment, some of which might have been kept in boxes or caskets. The floor of the second store-room, on the other hand, was littered with military finds, mostly equipment and some weaponry, many of which survived in a very fragile condition.

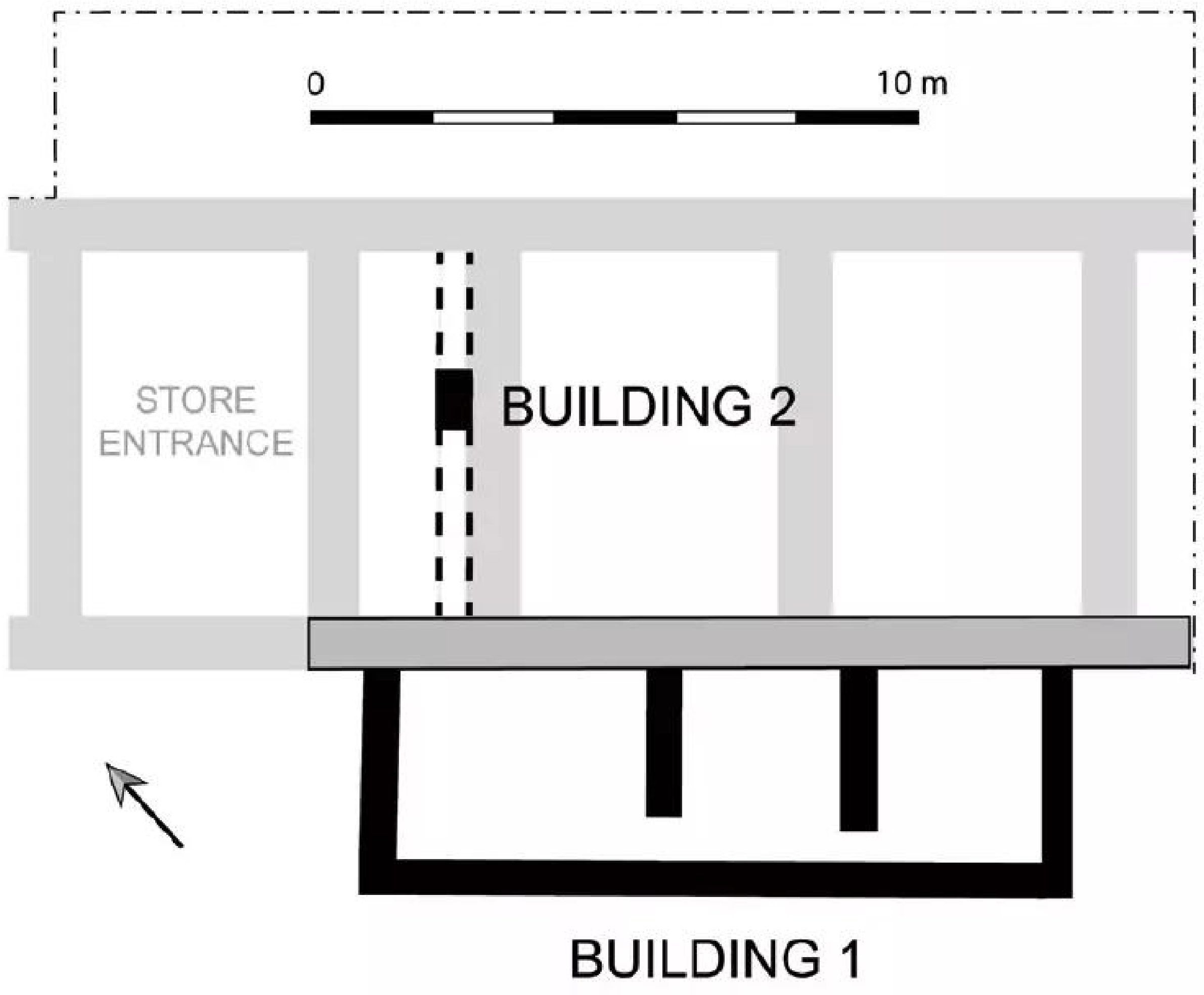
After the extent of the artefact scatter had been established and the individual finds exposed as far as possible with the trowel, expert advice was sought from Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales (AC-NMW) about how to recover these very delicate lumps of iron and copper-alloy artefacts.

Soon afterwards, curatorial and conservation staff from the museum lifted the finds in a total of 38 soil blocks that were taken to the National Museum Cardiff where they were X-rayed before the plaster casings were removed and their contents excavated under laboratory conditions. This painstaking work took eight years to complete and it slowly became clear

VIANOVA/UCL [6]

Top: Open Day activities at Priory Field

Below: Plan of the 'post-Roman' buildings and the earlier legionary store; and bottom: Photograph of 'post-Roman' Building 1 (shown in yellow) during excavation



that the soil blocks contained the highly fragmentary remains of an elaborately decorated horse's headpiece, a set of scale body armour, at least two sets of dismantled iron-plate body armour, and an array of other artefacts that had probably been stored on shelves before the building's collapse.

Many of the iron plates were almost entirely mineralised and most could not be removed as single objects; they were consolidated with the partially excavated soil blocks instead. The conservation work at AC-NMW represents an enormous contribution of time, resources, and skill, and the results are exceptional – the very fragile remains of very rare pieces of Roman military equipment would not have been recognised without this patient expertise.

The horse's headpiece is an example of a leather chamfron covered with hundreds of round copper pins, studs, and other decorative plaques, that was probably worn by a cavalryman's or officer's horse on parade, or at other official ceremonies to commemorate special occasions. The chamfron's leather mask had long since decayed and only the copper fittings survived in a jumbled mass within the largest soil block (including the mask's left ear-guard).

This type of chamfron has been found only in Roman Britain and the Priory Field example is similar to others from Vindolanda and Newstead in northern Britain, where the leather survived in waterlogged deposits. However, the Priory Field find is unique because it also included fish-scale panels of overlapping pins.

The author Arrian, writing in the early second century, described the exercises known as the hippika gymnasia that Roman cavalrymen practised to demonstrate their horsemanship and martial prowess. These involved a number of complex manoeuvres performed by two opposing teams, often in front of important spectators. Riders would wear face-mask helmets while their mounts bore protective chamfrons (often referred to today as cavalry 'sports' gear).

The hippika gymnasia was a highly formalised performance whose origins are believed to lie in the Game of Troy (Iustus Troiae), where one team would perform as Greeks while the other played the role of Trojans and Amazons. If the Priory Field chamfron was used in such hippika gymnasia in, or around, the fortress at Caerleon, the bust with the cap on its surviving ear-guard suggests that the horse wearing it would have been on the Trojan side, in which case its rider may well have worn a Phrygian-inspired 'sports' helmet, such as the example found at Crosby Garrett in Cumbria.

The absence of the Priory Field chamfron's larger decorative elements, most notably the domed eye-guards, demonstrates that it had already been stripped of most of its copper-alloy fittings before the store building's collapse. It is likely that the scale and plate armour found with it had also been disarticulated, though whether the intention was to repair these items for future use, or to simply recycle their most valuable parts, is not known.

The scale armour (lorica squamata) survived only as masses of jumbled copper-alloy scales and an iron breastplate (unique from a legionary context) from various soil blocks. A copper-alloy sheet decorated with a Capricorn depicted in closely spaced punched dots might have been intended to decorate an iron plate, such as the breastplate.

The soil blocks also included elements of at least two sets of disassembled iron plate-armour (lorica segmentata), the articulated segmental armour used by the Roman legions from the beginning of the first century. This type of cuirass consisted of multiple overlapping plates joined together by means of riveted leather straps and copper-alloy hinges, hooks, loops, and rings.

The Priory Field lorica segmentata is of the Newstead type that was introduced probably in the first half of the second century AD and continued in use into the late third century, or possibly the early fourth century. The sets had been stripped of most of their copper-alloy fittings and different plate types, from the shoulders, chest, and abdomen, seem to have been stacked separately together.

The segmented armour from Priory Field is one of the latest finds of this kind of cuirass from the Roman Empire and it could have been between 50 and 150 years old by the time the store building collapsed c.300. This suggests that the room might have been used to keep high-status or prestige items that were considered (or had been considered) 'special' in some way, perhaps because they were needed for ceremonies and parades?

This would explain the presence of the highly unusual horse's chamfron, the scale and segmented body armour (all of which were probably of some antiquity when the building was abandoned and collapsed), and also the couple of very unusual spearheads that might have served as special standards of some kind.

After Roman Caerleon?

Two new masonry buildings were constructed among the ruins of the old and partially demolished legionary store building. The store's façade seems to have been partially standing when it was reused by at least one poorly built three-room cottage-like building (Building 1), whose walls had been carefully laid using blocks of different sizes, though these sat directly on the old yard without foundations. Not only did the walls undulate as they followed the contours of the underlying yard surface, but they were also earth-bonded and the building fell down at some point, possibly not very long after its construction.

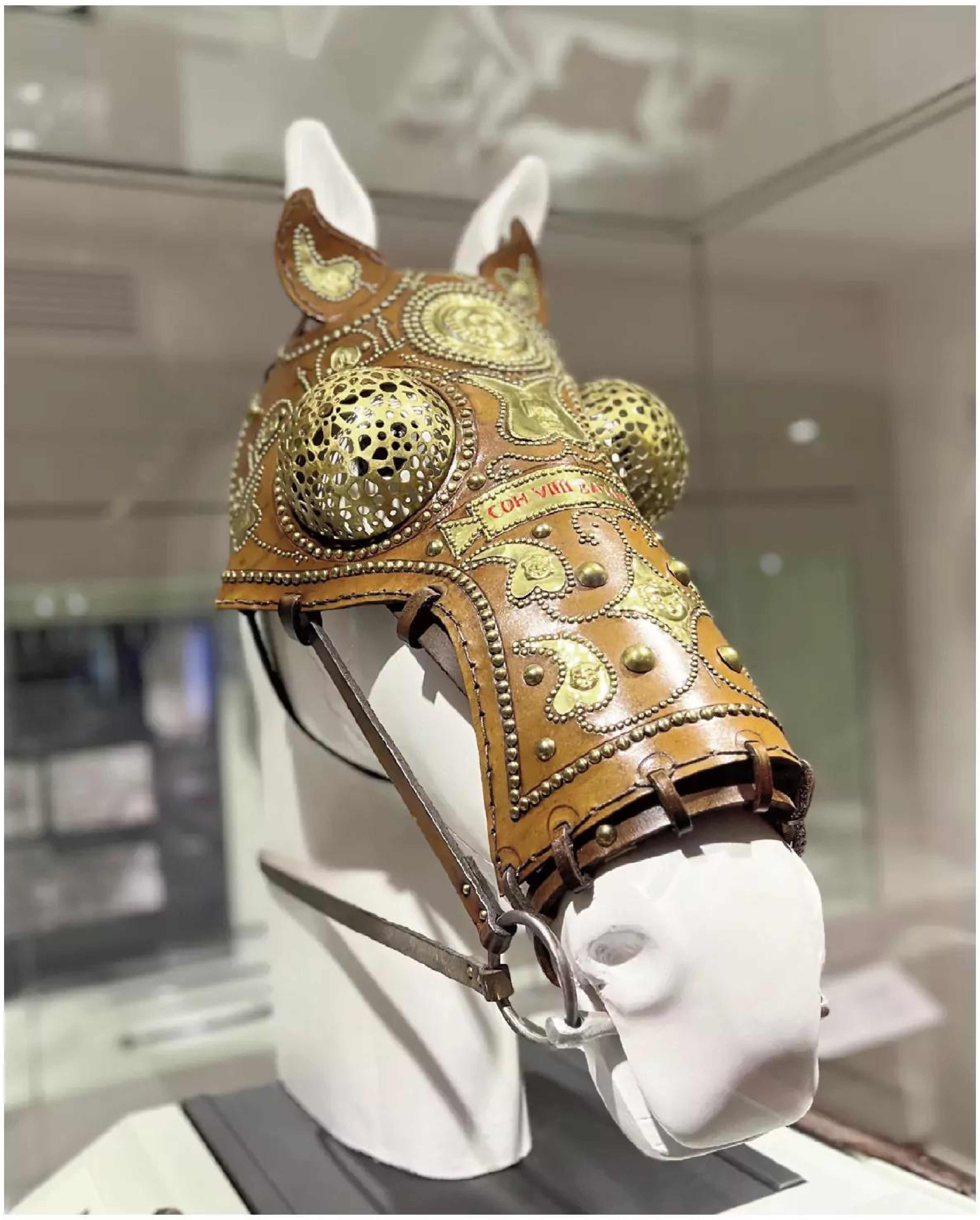
Building 1 was most probably an agricultural building of some kind. The inverted roof tile in the corner of the lowest course of the southern end wall served as a drain for water or other liquids from the building's interior, in which case the room at this end of the building might have been used to keep animals – perhaps a sty for one or two pigs? The area outside the building, and into which the tile drain emptied, could have been some form of animal pen.

The central room contained a large 0.7m deep stone-lined pit whose charcoal-rich fills indicate it had been used to store grain for human consumption – mainly wheat, with smaller quantities of barley and oats; the low incidence of chaff and weed seeds shows the grain had already been winnowed and fine-sieved before being stored in the pit. The stone slabs used to line the pit's sides would have projected above the room's floor; it could have been closed with a large lid, or covered with planking.

The finds assemblages recovered from Building 1 are consistently late Roman in character and, on their own, indicate that this phase of occupation at Priory Field dates to the later fourth century. The five coins from this phase are noticeably later than the large group from the store's earlier demolition and collapse, and include a bronze coin struck between AD 364 and 375 from the uppermost fill of the middle room's pit (it is the latest coin from the Priory Field excavation and one of the last Roman coins known from Caerleon).

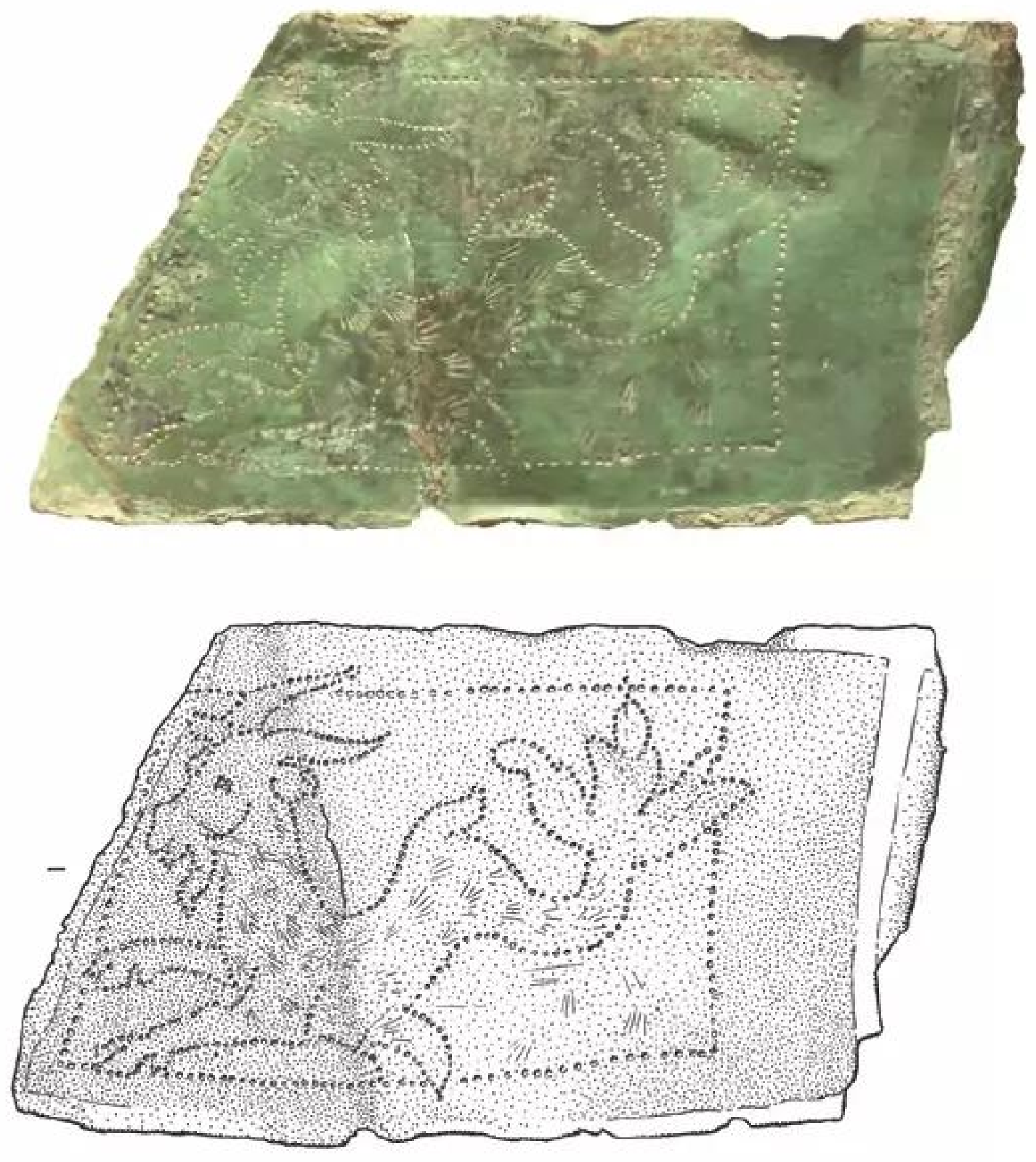
The relatively small quantity of pottery from deposits related to Building 1 also conspicuously post-dates the assemblage from the legionary store's demise, containing vessels that were manufactured no earlier than the second half of the fourth century.

However, four charcoal samples from Building 1's pit fills produced radiocarbon dates that demonstrate this building was constructed and in use between AD 430 and 600, most likely during the decades either side of 500 (and therefore much later than the material culture it was associated with). This places the construction and use of Building 1 after Roman Britain had ceased to exist as a political entity (i.e. after c.410), but when people in Caerleon apparently were still using a Romano-British material culture and,



Right: Reconstruction of a Roman cavalry chamfron from Vindolanda

THE VINDOLANDA TRUST



Right: Copper-alloy sheet decorated with a Capricorn for a possible breastplate

VIANOVA/UCL

presumably, behaving like Roman-Britons in some way.

That the exclusive use of Roman (or Romano-British) objects, and the practices they were associated with, seem to have been a normal part of life around 500 has profound implications for how fifth and sixth century archaeology in Britain should be identified, described, and interpreted, which in this part of south Wales looks convincingly 'Romano-British', and not at all 'post-Roman'.

Building 1 is the first new structure at a Roman site definitively dated to the post-Roman fifth and sixth centuries from Wales (and, arguably, from Britain). Its architecture, as well as its likely agricultural functions, illustrate Isca's transition from an imperial legionary fortress to a place inhabited by a community leading very different lives to earlier generations of the Second Augustan Legion's soldiers. It is highly significant that, although Caerleon had changed very dramatically from 300 to 500, it seems to have remained a place where a Romano-British way of life continued long after the demise of Britannia.

Archaeological training and engagement

The Priory Field excavation was also a training and engagement project. Dozens of archaeologists, students and volunteers worked on site during the two seasons (many other students, also contributed to the post-excavation work, particularly on the finds conservation). Undergraduate students from Cardiff University, the UCL Institute of Archaeology, and Durham University took part, while the project welcomed several students taking A-level Archaeology at Colchester Sixth Form College (the qualification was abolished in 2017), as well as a number of university applicants who were offered 'Pre-Uni Taster' sessions for one or two weeks on the excavations.

The project developed an extensive programme of community engagement activities designed to provide opportunities for people to volunteer on the excavation, and to see the trench being excavated and hear about what had been found so far. A total of 77 volunteers joined the excavation, where they took part in the full range of archaeological tasks, including digging, recording, and finds washing.

From schoolchildren to pensioners in their 70s, our volunteers worked alongside professional and student archaeologists for afternoons, days off from work, and weekends, while several stayed with the project for considerably longer.

Guided tours took place twice a day during both seasons and Open Days were organised to coincide with bank holidays and other public events in Caerleon. Almost 7,000 people came to see the excavation and the Open Days proved to be incredibly popular, when visitors were welcomed by students dressed in Roman costumes who would show them around the site and encourage them to take part in various hands-on activities designed to complement the guided tours and stimulate further interest in the site and in archaeology more widely.

These activities, several of which were devised and arranged by undergraduate and postgraduate students, included a Roman pot workshop, an authentic Roman cookery display (with Edith Evans of the Gwent Glamorgan Archaeological Trust), pot washing and wet-sieving for environmental remains, a gallery of colouring sheets and colouring competitions for younger children, as well as dressing up in Roman armour also for younger visitors.

Legacy

What the Priory Field project found, and how it engaged a wider audience, were amazing and the excavation represents a number of significant firsts for the site, as well as for Roman archaeology more generally.

Not only was it the first major excavation at Caerleon in the twenty-first century, it was the first occasion that an archaeological trench had been positioned to answer specific research questions about the interior of the fortress. It was also the first legionary store building excavated to modern standards in the Roman Empire.

The Priory Field excavation report is a significant milestone in Caerleon's long history of archaeological research, and it demonstrates that even apparently well-known sites, such as Isca, have many secrets that remain to be revealed.

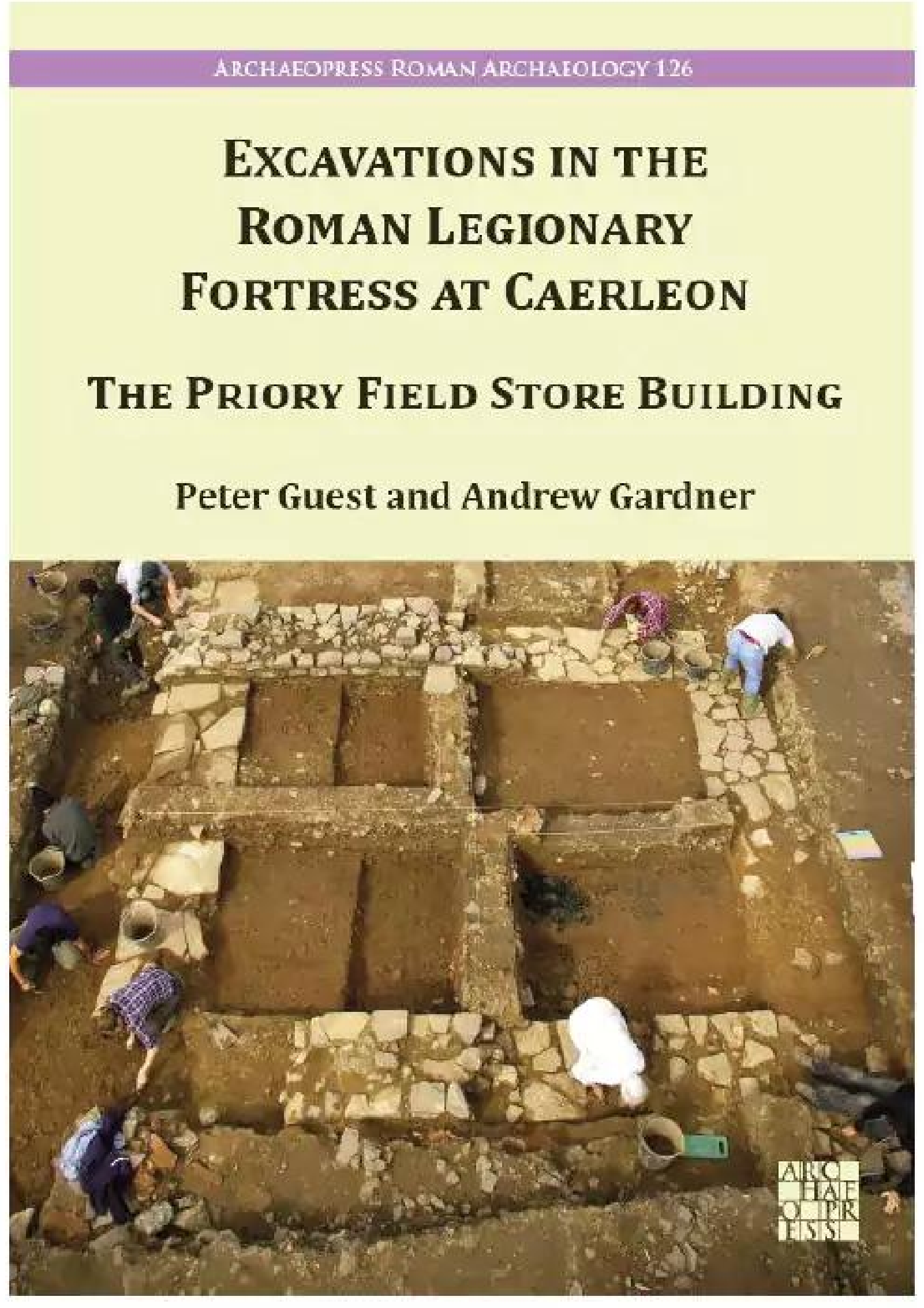
The Priory Field excavation report

The Priory Field report was published earlier this year and is available to buy as a paperback book, or as a free PDF eBook from Archaeopress: https://www.archaeopress.com/Archaeopress/Products/9781803276908

Citation: Guest, P, Gardner, A. 2025. *Excavations in the Roman Legionary Fortress at Caerleon. The Priory Field Store Building*. Oxford: Archaeopress. DOI: 10.32028/9781803276908

Further information

- For more information about the Priory Field excavation, visit: https://vianovaarchaeology.com/roman-caerleon/priory-field/
- For more information about sites to visit at Caerleon, visit: https://cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/caerleon-roman-amphitheatre. ■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EXCAVATIONS IN THE ROMAN LEGIONARY FORTRESS AT CAERLEON

THE PRIORY FIELD STORE BUILDING

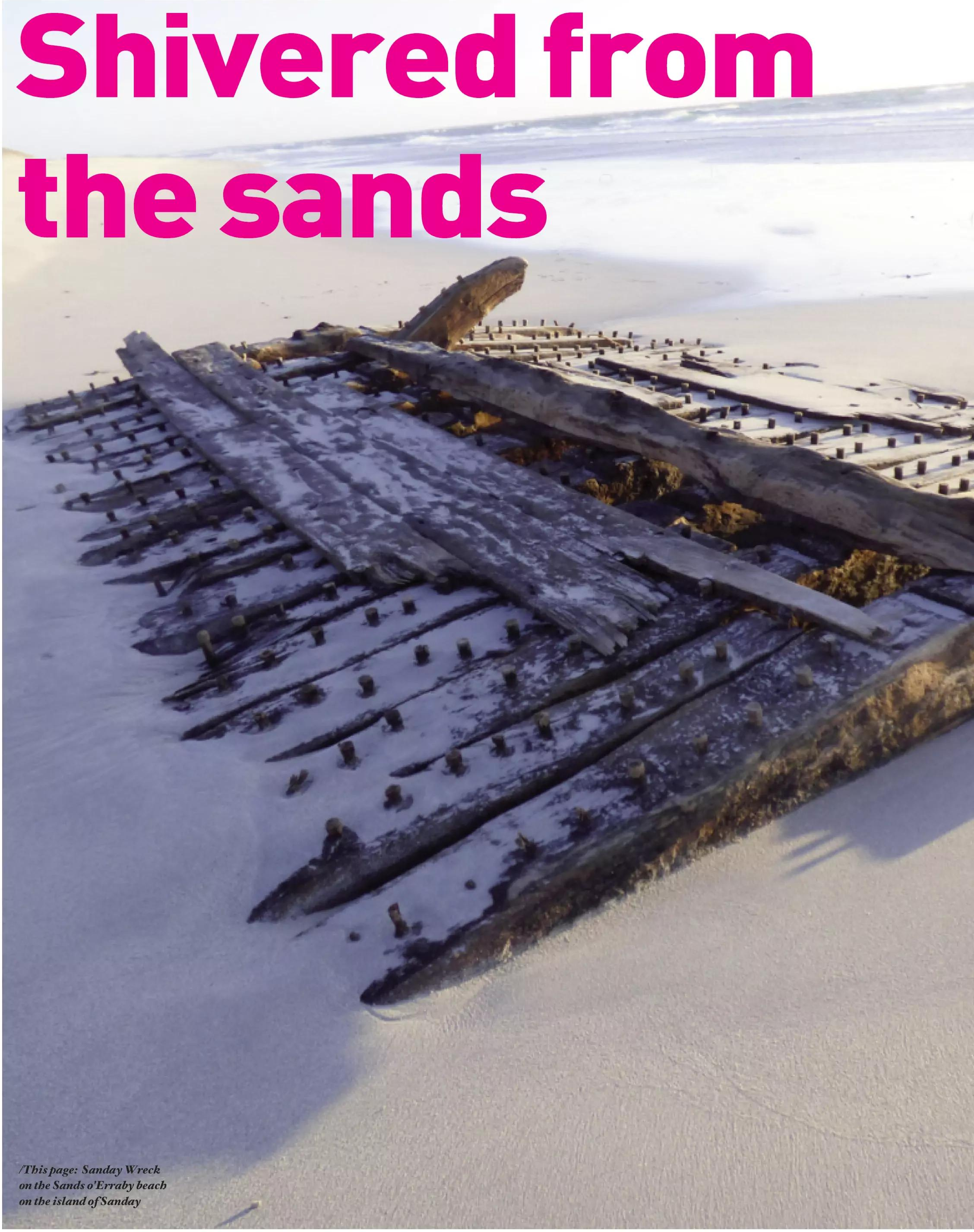
Peter Guest and Andrew Gardner

Acknowledgements

The Priory Field excavation was by undertaken by Cardiff University and the UCL Institute of Archaeology on behalf of Cadw (Priory Field is owned by the Welsh Government and managed by Cadw). Cadw also provided substantial financial assistance at all stages of the project, including this article, and we are grateful to Cadw's Dr Jonathan Berry and his colleagues for their longstanding support.

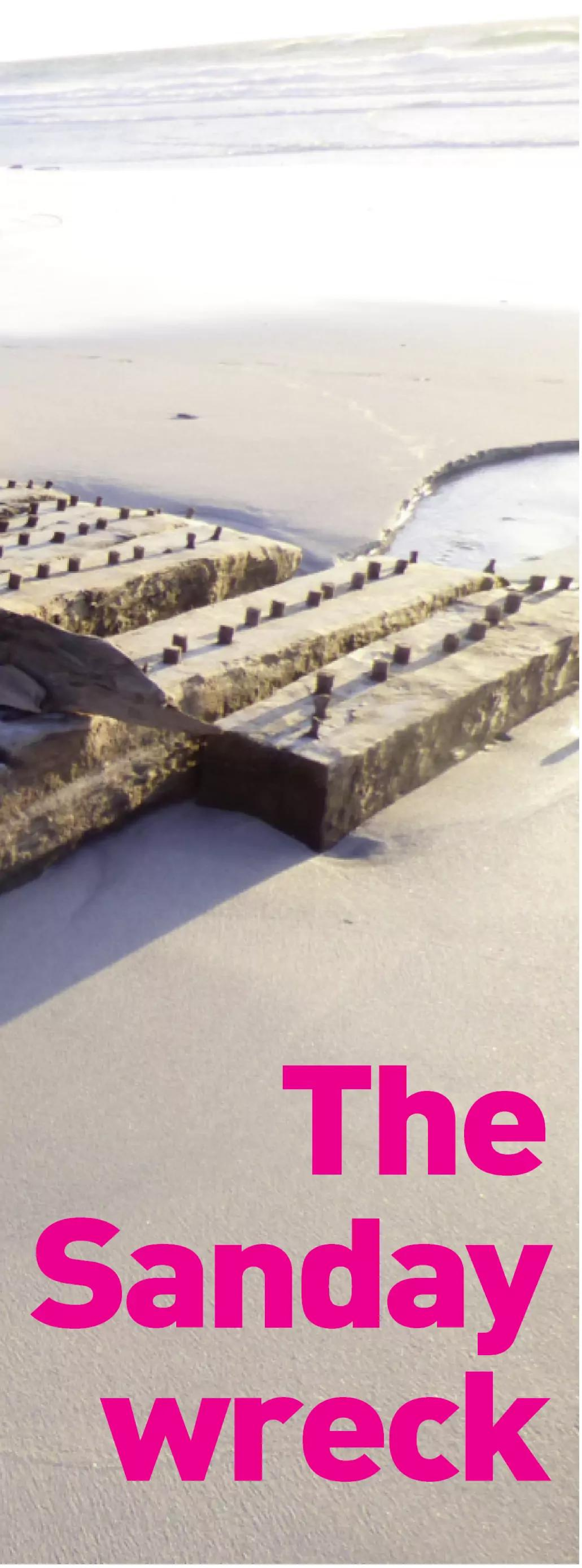
We are also very grateful to the many field archaeologists, conservators, archaeological scientists, finds specialists, illustrators, and photographers involved in the Priory Field project, who contributed in all sorts of ways, small and large, to the Priory Field excavation over the years.

Shivered from the sands



/This page: Sanday Wreck on the Sands o'Erraby beach on the island of Sanday

ROD THORNE



The Sanday wreck

In early 2024, winter storms exposed the wreck of a 250-year-old ship – a large section of wooden ship hull emerged from the intertidal deposits on Sand o'Erraby beach on the isle of Sanday. Ben Saunders, senior marine archaeologist at Wessex Archaeology describes its discovery, rescue, recovery, and eventual identification; and why this small Orkney island is commonly known as the 'cradle of shipwrecks'.

Welcome to Sanday

The island of Sanday lies in the north of the Orkney Islands, an archipelago in the north of Scotland made up of more than 70 individual islands, each with its own unique history and identity. Sanday is made up of a sinuous series of rolling green hills, which, from the sea, look like a pod of whales breaching the sea surface – the island's famous white sand beaches the spray and foam of their wake.

You're never far from the sea in Sanday, rarely out of earshot of the waves as they lap or crash, or roar, depending on the weather. Sanday is only around 20 km long but the crenellations of headlands and bays means that it has a coastline of around 75 km.

It may seem, to the slightly more populated centres of London or Edinburgh, to be remote, and far away from the centres of finance and decision-making and, therefore, unimportant and uninteresting. Tell a Sandayite this and they'll rightly scoff. Sanday is, when you live there, not remote at all. It is, in fact, the centre of the world, with connections and contacts reaching far across the globe and back through time.Even if you prefer your supermarkets not to be a ferry or flight away, there's one thing that Sanday is undeniably the centre for, and has been for centuries: shipwrecks.

The nursery of shipwreck

In 1788, the *Aberdeen Journal*, stout chronicler of the fears and concerns of the northeast of Scotland, announced the wrecking of yet another vessel on the shores of Sanday to its readership of shipowners, merchants, and aldermen of the Granite City. The ship had been "totally wrecked with 56 hands on board last week on the island of Sanday... Sanday in Orkney is the nursery of shipwreck in Scotland". Many more wrecks must have preceded this one to have built up that reputation, and many more would follow. Sanday's large number of wrecks is due in part to its location at the southern end of the Fair Isle Channel, an important global shipping route into, and out of, the North Sea.

A study into the shipwrecks around Sanday, completed by Alan Braby in the 1990s, identified more than 260 wrecks and strandings on the shores and surrounding waters of the island between 1530 and 1973.

The numbers prior to the 1750s were somewhat more scant, due more to the poor recording of wrecks before this period than any particular reversal in sea safety. They include proud warships, fat-bellied merchantmen filled with the wonders of the East and West Indies, emigrant ships from the Baltics and Germany questing for a new life in the New World, smaller fishing craft of all sizes, and not forgetting the inter-island flit boats that rowed or sailed through the fierce tidal currents to deliver people and produce to Sanday.

Each wreck is a nodal point in a myriad of stories: the story of the ship; its cargo; its crew; those on shore saving or salvaging; the officials who try to recoup losses; and the artefacts that are left behind. And so, this is the story of the Sanday shipwreck, as best as we can tell.

The storm's harvest

Alfie, a young runner home for the weekend from school in Kirkwall, jogged along the high tide line, a trail of footprints arcing round from the headland of Tres Ness with its megalithic tomb, northward along the Bay of Newark in the east of Sanday.

The beach curves round into the Bay of Lopness before terminating at Start Point, its lighthouse uniquely bedecked in Betelgeusian vertical stripes of black and white to differentiate it to mariners from the numerous other lighthouses in the area.

It was February, the new year not long out of the wrapping paper was cool and crisp. As Alfie made his way along the beach, he noticed that his feet were not the only things to have impacted the sands recently. Something had taken a bite out of the dunes that protect the sheltered embayment of Cata Sands from stormy assaults of the North Sea.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND

Start Point was the first lighthouse in Scotland to have a revolving light, enabling it to stand out from other lighthouses in the hours of darkness. Variations in lighting and colour are vital for shipping to work out which lighthouse they're looking at.

Top: Ben Saunders, senior marine archaeologist at Wessex Archaeology, studies a timber sample used for the scientific analysis of the Sanday wreck

Right: A close-up of the timbers ahead of them being placed in the tank

ORKNEY ISLANDS COUNCIL

A cascade of tins, glass bottles, and other detritus had been released from the confines of a rubbish pit dug into the dunes in the early twentieth century. Further on, he saw an unfamiliar mass on the shore. As he padded closer it became a wooden whaleback, planks and frames criss-crossed in a lattice. But he'd read enough stories to know what a wreck looks like. He reported his find and word spread, fast as it only can in a close-connected society.

Word then spread off-island as the find was reported to the Orkney Islands Council (OIC) archaeologist, Paul Sharman, and to the BBC. It looked impressive and there was certainty among the islanders that it was important, perhaps a Spanish galleon lost in the Armada, a Dutch treasure ship bringing back spices and jewels from Batavia, or any one of the other hundreds of Sanday's wrecks. While there were many differing opinions on its origin, the community were united in their desire to know more about this wreck.

A race against time and tide

While the islanders awaited agreement from Historic Environment Scotland (HES) that the wreck was potentially significant, they jumped into action to protect it. Members of the Sanday Heritage Group (SHG) started to record as much as they could, in case it was buried again in the shifting sands. Tris Thorne, a marine surveyor, completed a photographic survey which he then processed into a photogrammetric model.

Photogrammetry is the process of using overlapping photographs of an object to create a 3D model of that same object and has become an effective, rapid, and accurate recording technique when combined with georeferencing.

By this point the maritime archaeologists from Wessex Archaeology had been contacted by HES for advice through their Underwater Archaeological Services contract. Under the assumption that the wreck section would become reburied in the intertidal sands before specialists could get there in person, they put together a list of important photos and measurements for the community to take of specific parts of the wreck, which might might help to narrow down age and origin.

The first information to come back demonstrated the sheer scale of the section. It was roughly 10m long and 5m wide, and photos of some of the cross-sections showed typical features of oak timbers. This was a very heavy piece of ship, which would require heavy lift solutions to move in one piece. The overall weight could be calculated when two pieces became dislocated from the main section by the waves. After recovery and weighing by local farmer Raymond Brown on his farm's weighbridge, it was possible to put an overall weight of 10-12 tonnes for the whole section.

A project team was assembled between the SHG, HES, OIC, Wessex Archaeology and timber dating specialists Dendrochronicle, and plans were coming together for a focused recording and sampling strategy when it became clear that time was of the essence. An email on a Friday evening confirmed fears that the sea was not ready to give up this ship: The wreck section had moved down the beach and started to break up.

A rapid response and change in approach was needed, so wreck specialist Ben Saunders (Wessex Archaeology) and historic wood specialist Hamish Darrah (Dendrochronicle) cancelled their plans, the logistics team at Wessex procured ferry tickets, hired vans and accommodation at lightning speed, and two days later the duo were heading up from Edinburgh. The mission was to add to the recording already completed by SHG ahead of controlled disassembly on the beach.

But they couldn't do it alone, and thanks to Sanday's unrivalled community spirit they had all the support they needed. Myra Stockton, Ruth Peace, and Rod and Sylvia Thorne from the SHG organised support for the recovery from now-experienced timber recoverers Raymond Brown, James Muir, and Adam Towrie, and tractors, trailers, and a telehandler were dispatched to the beach so that the wreck could be recovered.

Each individual piece was numbered and carefully lifted with the telehandler for safe transportation to the Sanday Heritage Centre. The narrow tidal window before nightfall was made narrower by the farmers' second role in the island's fire service, which had an inspection that night. The team braved the last splashes of the receding tide to apply the numbering system using cattle tags and stainless-steel screws. Hamish, a City & Guilds qualified chainsaw operator, was on hand to make crucial cuts as required once the numbering and recording was done.

The first stage was to remove the outer hull planking, which as the section was upside down was facing skywards. This was done using a pry bar, where possible, to pop the planks off the treenails – the wooden pegs that held them to the framing timbers. Where these were too strong, a thin saw was inserted between the framing timber and the plank to cut the treenail. To everyone's delight, the wreck came apart like a dream.

It was clear at this point that the structural integrity of the wreck was down to the treenails holding the outer and inner planks onto the framing timbers. There were no fastenings between the framing timbers themselves at all, and the keel was held on to the frames by wrought iron bolts that are now little more than stains on the timber – the overall strength of the hull structure from so few fasteners was a real demonstration of the shipwright's art. As the moon rose, the tractors and their timber cargo looped round the end of the dunes and swept back around the edge of Cata Sands to the heritage centre. A triumph worthy of celebration for the whole team.

Seeing the trees for the wood

When the project team gathered together the next morning, their task was clear – they needed to record as much information about the individual timbers as possible through photographs, sketches, and notes of dimensions, while Hamish assessed the timbers for their dendrochronological potential.

This dating technique, also known as 'tree ring dating', uses the variations in the widths of the growth rings of trees to match against established chronologies. It doesn't just have the potential to give a date for when the trees were growing; because it compares against region-specific chronologies it can give a location for the forest the trees came from, too.

Over the course of the morning, and in a phone consultation with Dr Coralie Mills, who is the lead at Dendrochronicle, Hamish selected 19 timbers spread across the different elements of the hull: Four of the largest floor framing timbers, six of the smaller futtock framing timbers, four outer hull planks, and four of the internal (also known as ceiling) planks. The final sample was from the keel.

These timbers were chosen as they provided the best chance for recovering a date. They needed to have a suitable number of growth rings visible, and most importantly the presence of golden coloured sapwood against the dark chocolate brown of the oak heartwood, which would push a date as close to the year of felling as possible.

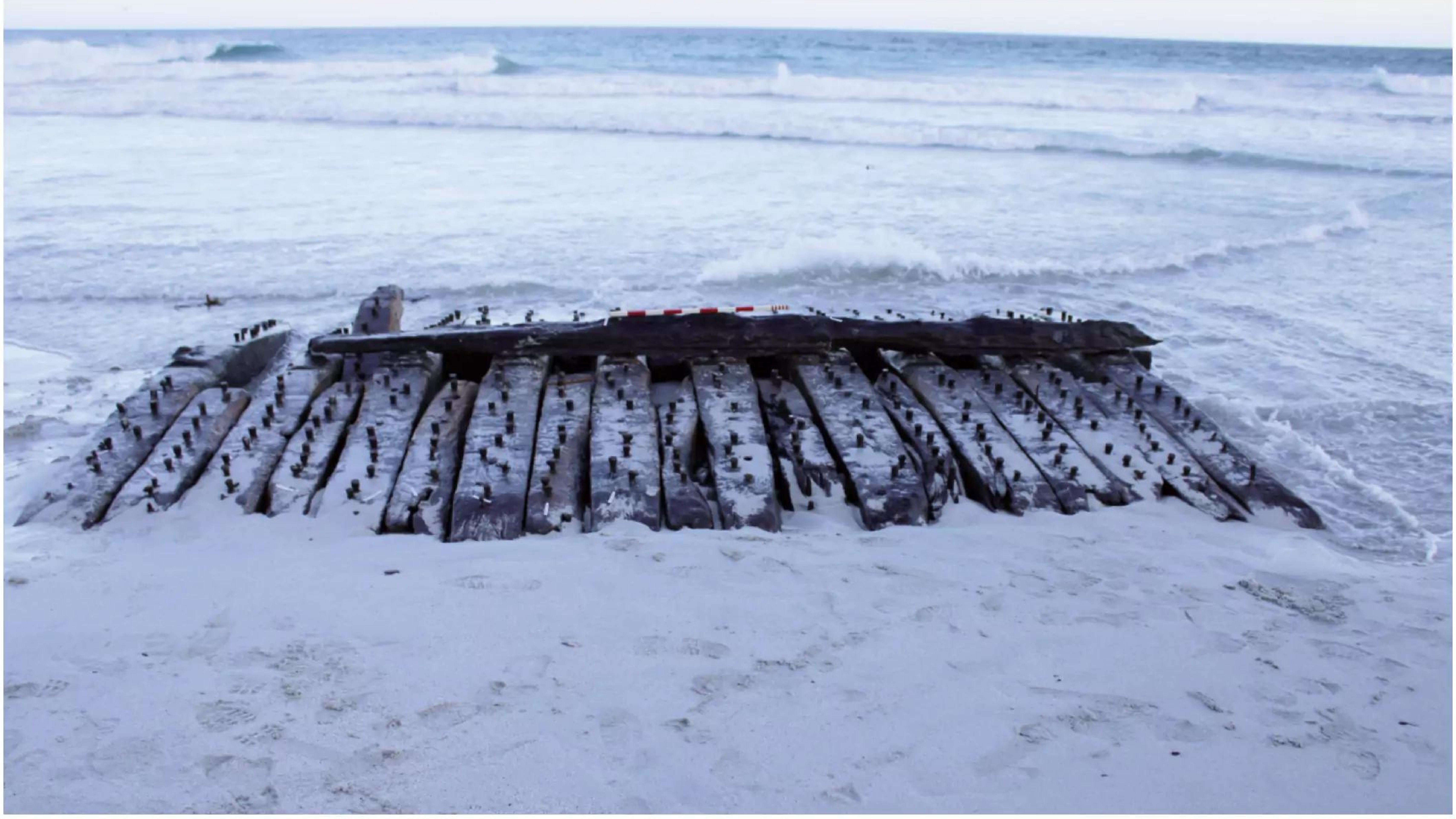
It had been decided that slices through the timbers would be a more suitable sample than the less damaging cores as they provided the opportunity for multiple attempts if the first analysis was inconclusive. The position of each cut was recorded and the second pieces numbered up to assist in a future reassembly if required.

During the rapid assessment, the sand caking the internal planking was washed off and the surfaces of these long timbers were visible for the first time.

A shout of surprise came from some of the community participants who spotted lines cut into the surface. Further inspection, and Hamish's experience with similar marks found in buildings around Scotland, identified these as possible trade marks relating to quantities and qualities of timber – another potential lead for this team of wreck detectives to follow to identify the ship.

The most extensively researched timber trade marks are found on timber exported from the Baltics during the nineteenth century, in particular from the important ports of Stettin, Danzig, Memel, and Riga, which had access to the great forests of Poland, Belarus and Lithuania. These marks often included an identifying mark for the timber merchant or assessor, known as a bracker. Many of these brackers were Jewish, as it was one of the few trades open to Jews in the Russian Empire.

With evidence mounting that the ship timbers had more potential to give glimpses into the history of shipbuilding and the timber trade, the SHG and members of the island's Development Trust met with the OIC heritage team to discuss next steps. Outside, the recording and sampling went on until, with minutes to spare


WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY

Top: The Sanday wreck on the shores of Sanday, February 2024

ORKNEY ISLANDS COUNCIL

Right: The Sanday wreck timbers being lowered into a freshwater tank at the Sanday Heritage Centre monitored by Ben Saunders from Wessex Archaeology

before the evening ferry, the final samples were carefully packaged, ready to go to the Denrochronicle lab.

The key discussion was how to keep the recovered timbers in good enough condition so that they could potentially be conserved in the future. It is essential to keep waterlogged timber wet – over time, water has saturated wood cells and replaced the cellulose; if the water is removed from drying out the cell structures collapse rapidly.

The most common conservation method for waterlogged timber is the replacement of the water with Polyethylene glycol, or PEG, as completed on the *Mary Rose* in Portsmouth, and the *Vasa* in Stockholm. This would be the ideal long-term option for the timbers, if research demonstrated that the wreck was of suitable significance.

In the medium term, what was needed was an enormous tank to place the timbers in, so they could be kept under water and the process of desalination (the process of replacing salty sea water with fresh water) could begin. As a stopgap, in what was hoped would be the short term, until funding for a stabilisation tank could be applied for, the SHG mobilised once more and requisitioned all of the blankets, sheets, and curtains within the island's Reuse Shop and wrapped the timbers up in them, soaking them down with a hose and covering the whole with a large silage tarp.

Over the next six months, they diligently 'watered the wreck' every week, or so, to keep the timbers from drying out.

A busy summer in Sanday

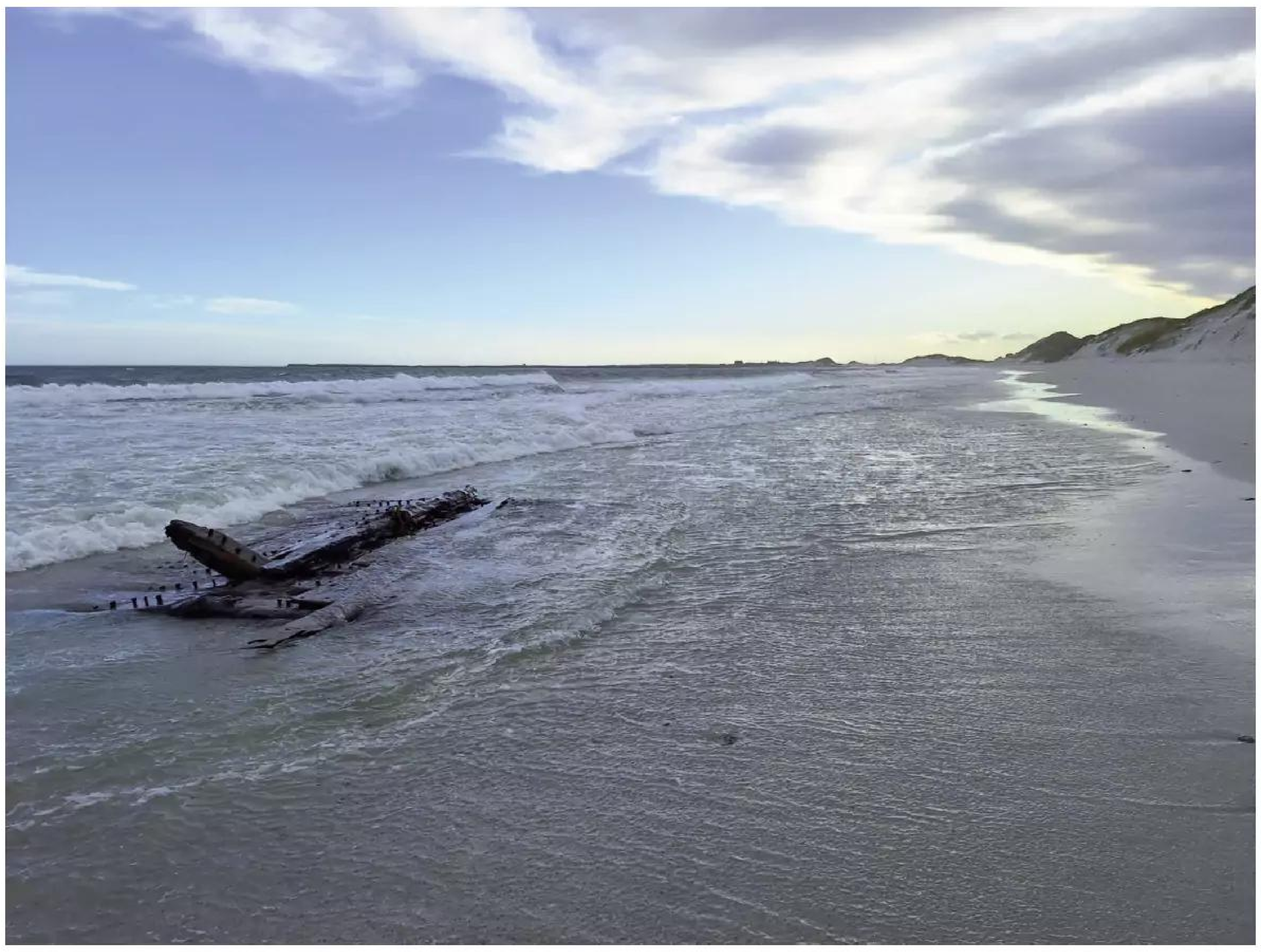
The wreck's identity had become a hot topic of discussion, not just in Sanday, but across the country. News of its discovery and the heroic efforts of the Sanday community had travelled far and wide, even to places quite remote from Sanday, like London.

Initial assessment of the timbers, along with further expert advice from ship specialists, such as Dr Colin Martin and Richard Endsor, suggested that the wreck was of a heavily built ship, likely dating to the seventeenth or eighteenth century, but still its origin was unclear. Some elements suggested English ship design and others matched with Dutch techniques. Given that the only material recovered was the timbers themselves, it would only be through analysis of these that an idea of origin, date, and maybe even a name could be found.

Dendrochronological analysis was the best tool for solving the mystery of the Sanday wreck's identity, but further detective work was needed to match up the science with the stories. A flurry of funding applications were sent out supported by all project partners: One from Orkney Islands Council to the National Heritage Memorial Fund for a stabilisation tank that would keep the timbers safe for multiple years if required; one from Wessex Archaeology to the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme for some community skills workshops to use the springboard of interest in the wreck to develop archaeological knowledge in Sanday; and a second to HES to support the additional research and dendro dating work necessary to adequately assess the significance of the wreck material.

Alongside this, Orkney Archaeology Society agreed to fund further researching skills workshops, which would crowdsource data and analytical time, as well as training up volunteer researchers. Working with the seasons, the different parts of the project took a staged approach to the work, with summer workshops using the timbers themselves to teach archaeological timber recording to 25 people, and further workshops run by specialist marine conservator Wendy Robinson looking at the conservation of ship timbers, Orkney wrecks, and folklore associated with wrecks.

Thanks to support from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the tank was fabricated in Kirkwall and brought to Sanday Heritage Centre where the timbers were carefully lifted and placed, snug as sardines in a tin, ready for the next stage.



Right: Sanday wreck in situ on the shores of Sands o'Erraby on the island of Sanday

WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY

Wooden ships are made up of many components and have been recognised as some of the most complex structures of the pre-industrial era. The keel forms the backbone of the ship, with framing timbers (the lowest known as floors, and the remainder as futtocks) creating the ribs of the ship, which is then covered with planking inside and out.

A voyage of discovery

When the results started to come in, they were very exciting. Fourteen of the samples slotted into a chronology, the dates were mid-eighteenth century and the best fitting chronologies were a mix of ones from southern and southwestern England.

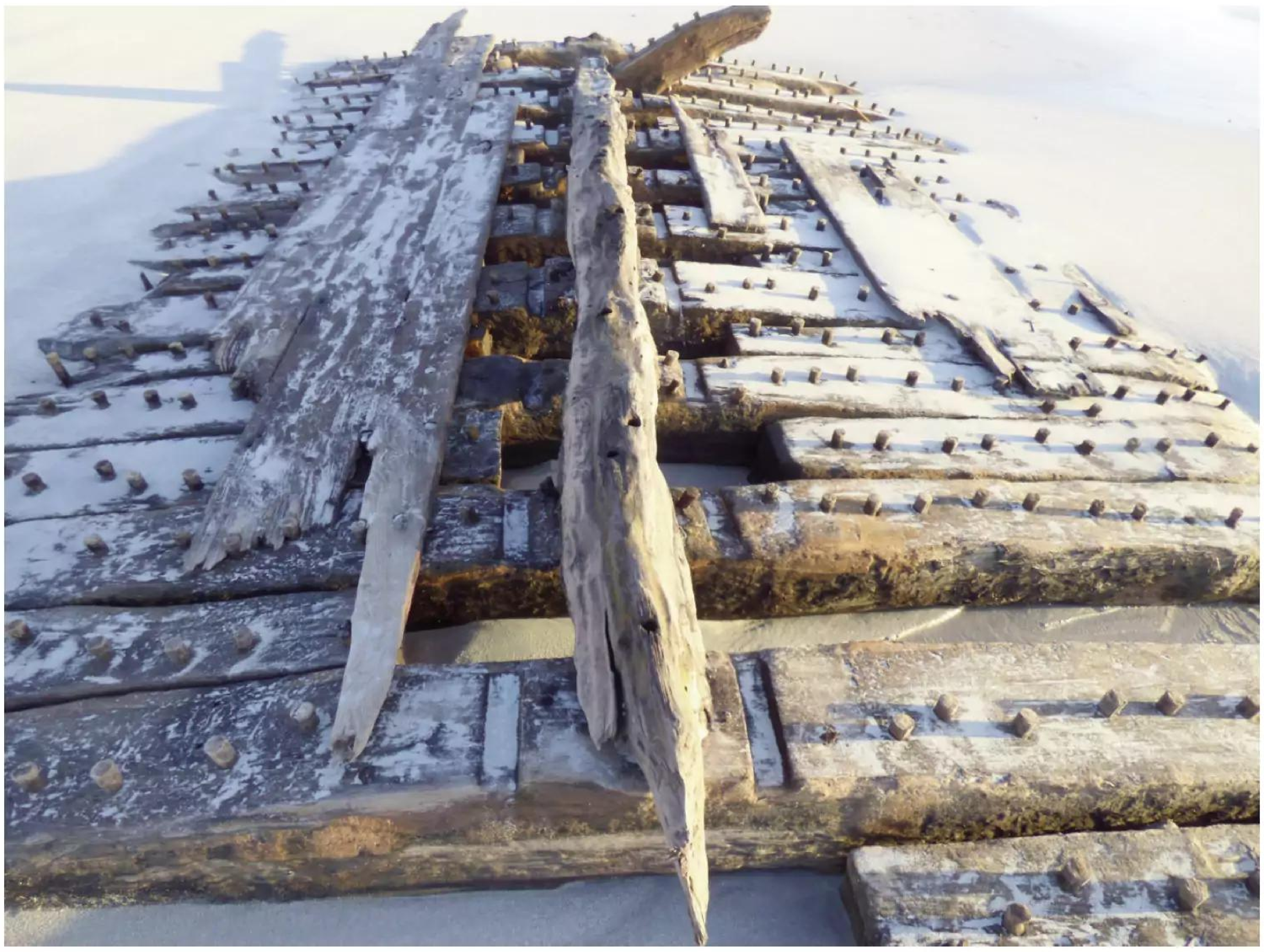
Coralie discussed the results with her peers and decided to do further analysis and more detailed research to try to narrow things down. But, there was now a closer timeframe to work with and a place of origin that could be significant.

While Coralie completed her pinpoint scientific analysis, the community-led research took a more analogue approach, combining research trips to The National Archives in Kew, Orkney Archives in Kirkwall, and the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich to gather the reams of data needed to narrow down the search. One of the vital tools was Alan Braby's archive from his Sanday Shipwreck Project; it was scanned and digitised to form part of a record of all material related to Sanday wrecks from the archives where it has been identified.

The wreck-researching workshops brought together a team of budding detectives to gather together as much information on each of the wrecks as possible, imagining each to be a possible origin for the timbers lying in the tank.

This evidence gathering was the first step in identifying which of those hundreds of wrecks could remain as a suspect for the identity of the Sanday wreck. The researchers brought together material from specialist archives, digitised records available through organisations like Lloyd's Register Foundation (LRF), and material from regional archives in the areas that the ships were from. This was a colossal amount of information, but as they say, many hands make light work, and many brains make bright work.

This work seemed to provide nearly endless rabbit holes of research filled with stories that could be teased out. It opened a window on North Sea trade patterns and maritime movement across the post-medieval period, with the vast majority of ships being from a limited number of routes: The local Orcadian and Highland vessels involved in fishing or movement of people around the islands; the ships from the Baltic and northern Europe using the



Above: A closer look at the Sanday wreck in situ

ROD THORNE

northern passage to get out into or return from the global trade routes; ships from the English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish ports around the Irish Sea taking the northern route round to either the Baltic, Norway, or the east coast of Britain; and the east coast whalers, travelling from London, Whitby, Hull, and Leith, to and from the Greenland Seas.

This presented a number of options for removing the ships which couldn't be considered as candidates. For example, the Orcadian craft tended to be small coastal vessels while the structure of the wreck section found was far too large and heavily built to be one of these small craft so they could be removed as a possibility straight away. The others remained possibilities, and so the researchers set about unpicking the biographies of each ship to see whether it matched what was known about the Sanday wreck.

The wreck detectives close in

What could be said for sure about the wreck when all that was there was timber? It was heavily built and made entirely of oak, so any ships that were recorded as being built out of other timber types could be removed. It was highly likely to have wrecked on the east of Sanday, or at least ended up there, which meant vessels wrecked in other parts of the island such as Stove, the Riv, and Otterswick could also be removed.

The dating and provenance of the timber provided the key piece in the puzzle, first narrowing the date of wrecking down and, second, identifying a likely region of construction. We could also remove any ships wrecked before the last definite date of felling for the timber that went into the ship, which Coralie has identified as 1764 (some other timbers had date ranges that went beyond this, but there was uncertainty about them).

To cast our net as wide as possible we decided to have a latest date cut-off of 75 years after the average date of the timbers, which meant that any ship wrecked after 1830 was discarded as a candidate as well.

We also know that it was built out of English oak, grown in the south and southwest of England, which means that it is highly likely to have been built in that region. The variety of sources is interesting too, and suggests either multiple repairs, an organisation that can bring in timber from a wide variety of sources, or both. There were no oak exports from England during this period – indeed the Royal Navy was importing vast quantities from the Baltic, North America, and the Caribbean at this point, mostly for use in the London and Medway yards.

Therefore, the ship can't have been built elsewhere using exported timber, and so we are looking for a ship that was most likely built somewhere on the extensive coastline between Bristol and Brighton. This combination of rigorous scientific analysis with crowdsourced research information was the most significant factor in identifying the wreck.

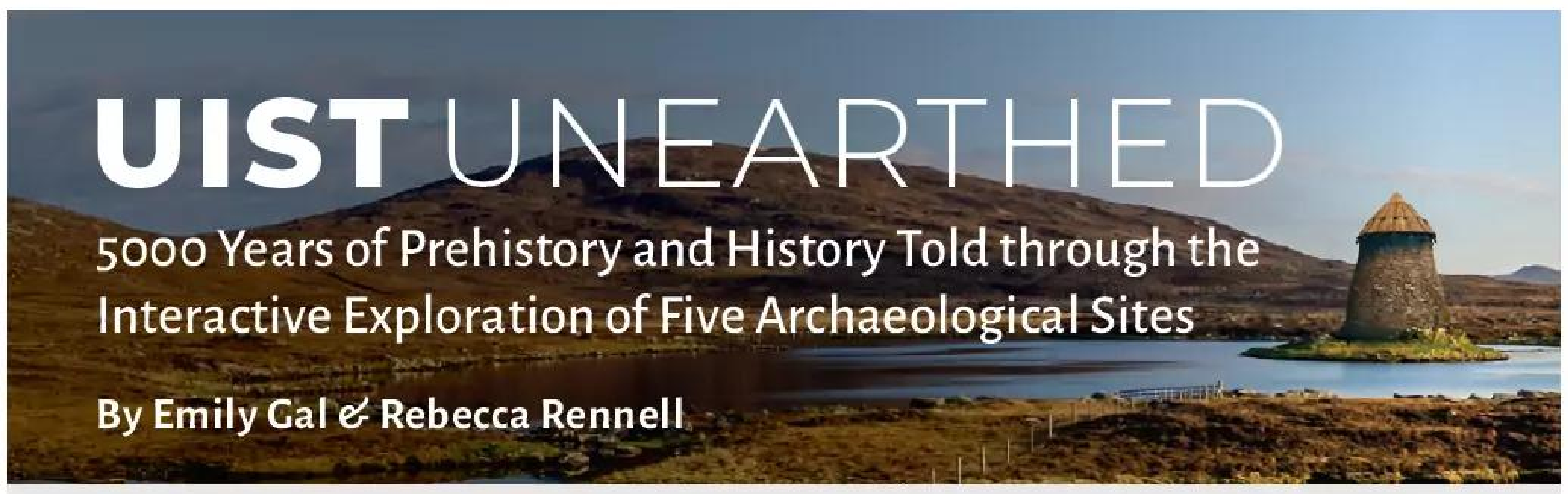
The Sanday Shipwreck Survey included a range of information about each wreck. Some had no reported name, just a description and details of cargo or suspected origin. Some had name, home port, captain, cargo, and trade route, plus further details on the wrecking or successful salvage of the vessel.

These details could be cross-referenced with the information on ships

WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY [3]

Above: A close-up of the 3D model of the Sanday wreck, which has recently been identified as the **Earl of Chatham**

Right and below right: The 250-year-old remains of the Sanday wreck have been turned into an interactive 3D model of the remains



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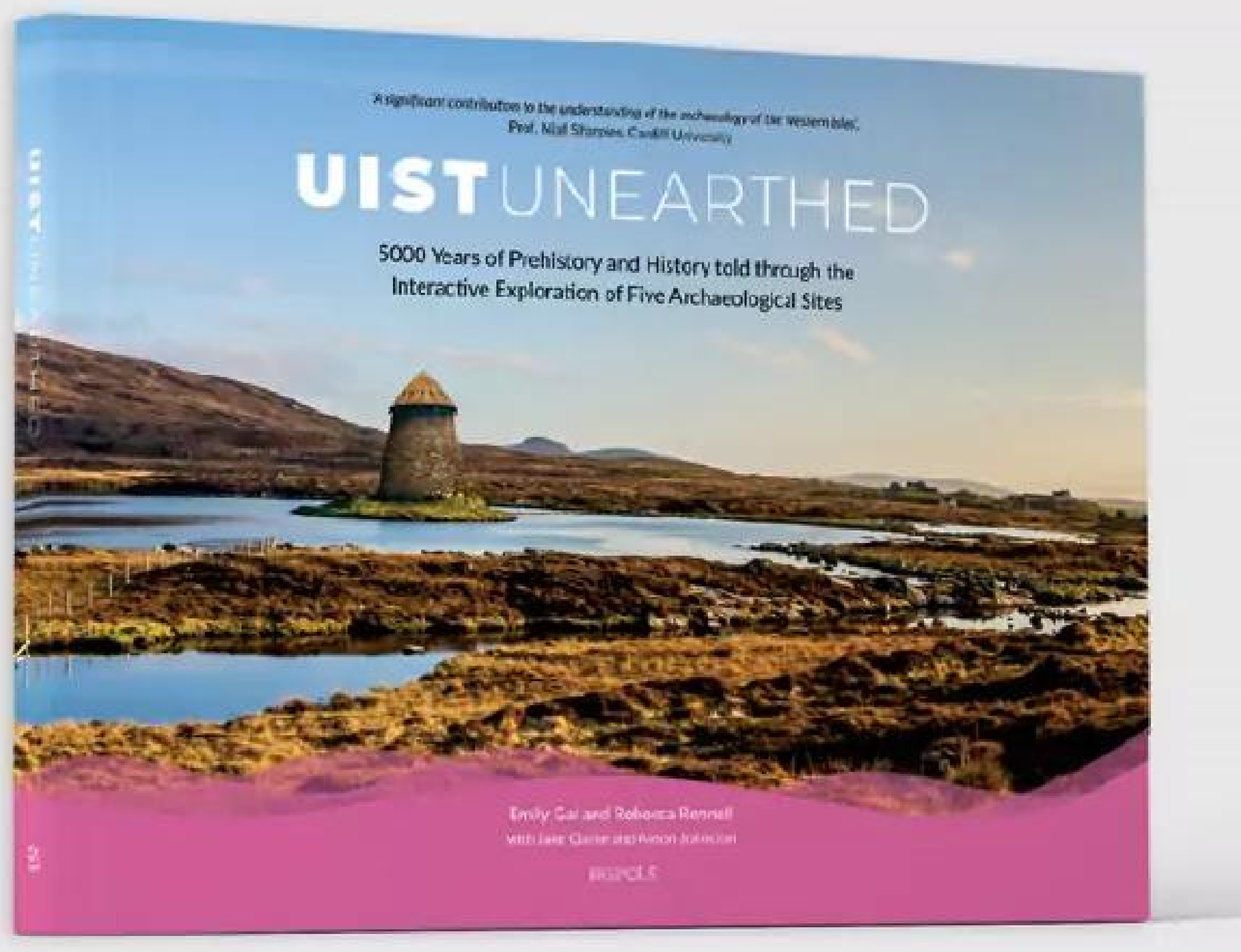

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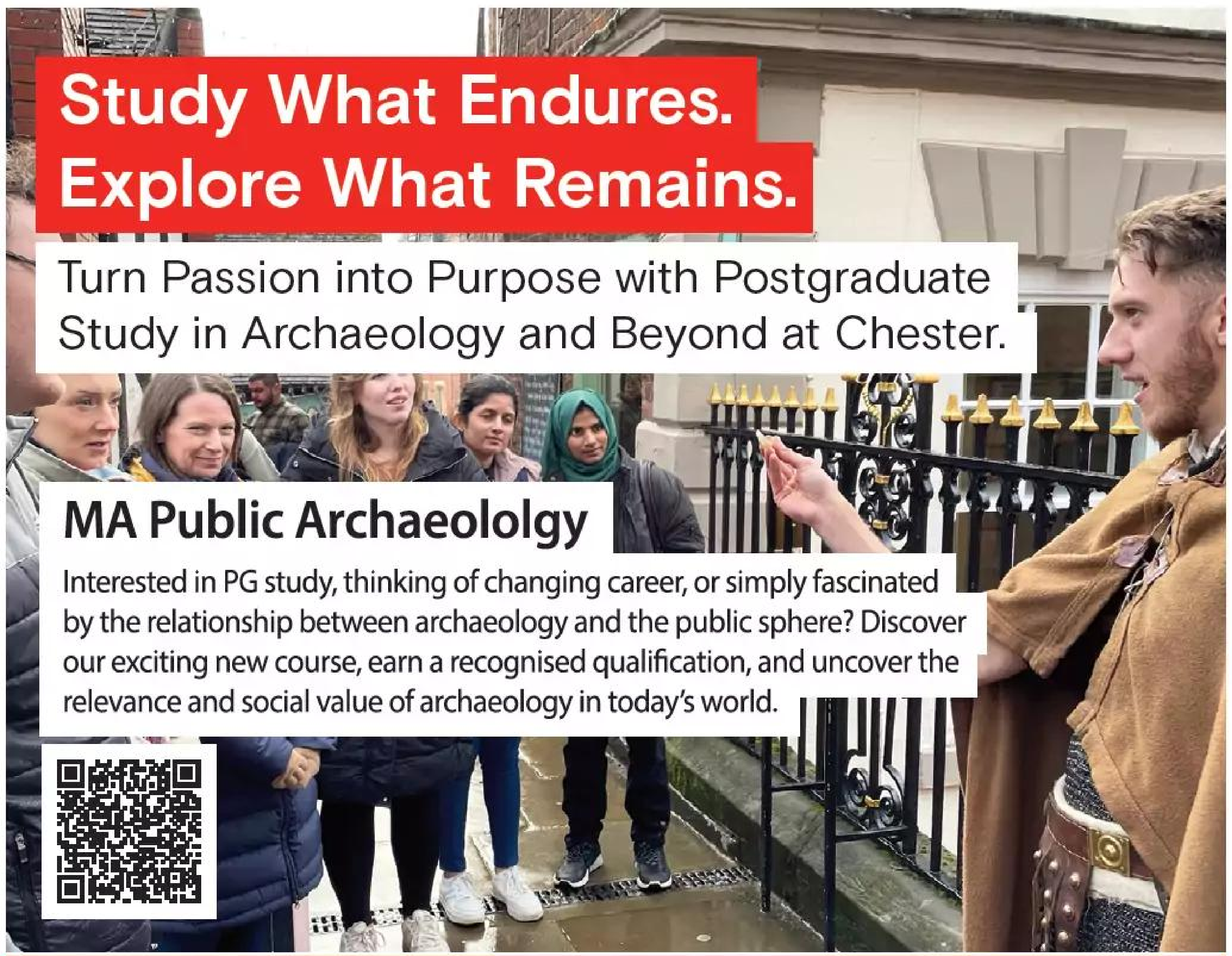

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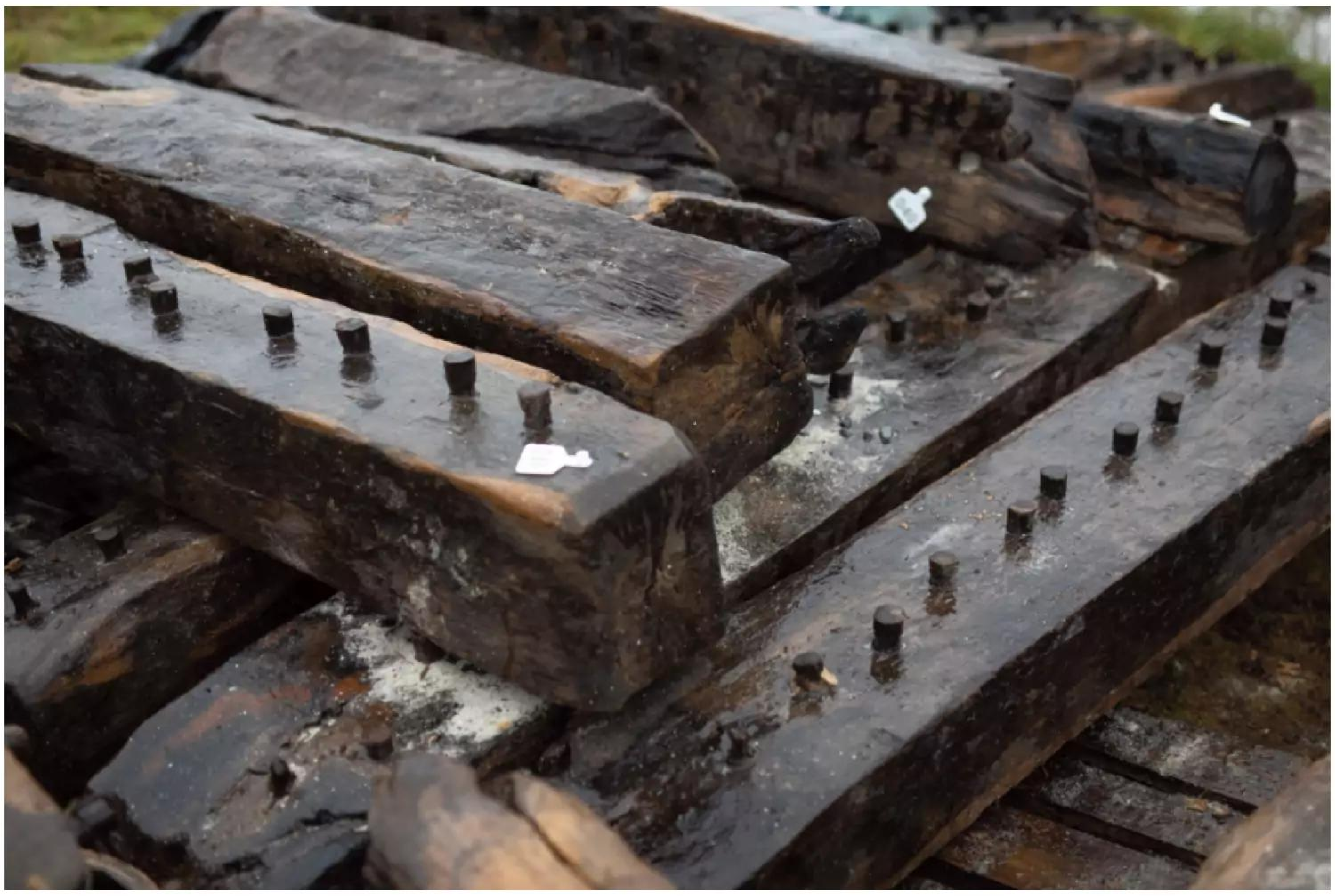


ORKNEY ISLANDS COUNCIL [3]

Above: The Sanday wreck timbers before being placed in a freshwater tank at the Sanday Heritage Centre in 2024

SANDAY
HERITAGE
CENTRE

Right: The team lift and place the Sanday wreck timbers in the tank at Sanday Heritage Centre

Right: Ben Saunders from Wessex Archaeology oversees the timbers being placed in the tank at Sanday Heritage Centre

outlined in the historic Lloyd's Register of Shipping, which contains a wealth of information on the construction and operation of individual ships.

Lloyd's Register is an ongoing publication which details information on ships registered with Lloyd's insurers in London. The earliest surviving register dates to 1764 although some of the early years partially or entirely missing. The surviving registers have been digitised by the LRF (https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/lloyds-register-of-ships-online).

Even the early ones detail when and where a ship was built, what repairs it had, and details of its size and layout. Each record, seemingly so sparse, hides a world of detail and it is these worlds that the researchers explored to provide more information on the ships in the database.

Bringing together the strands

There were complications along the way: There is no Equity Rule of unique names for ships: Looking up a ship named Betsy or Mary can return upwards of a hundred results, which the researchers diligently pared down using other information available, such as home port or trade route or tonnage (a measure of displacement which provides a gauge on the size of the vessel) and looked for port registries the ship might be in.

Much of this information was gleaned from specialist industry archives or port registers held within local archives, and the expertise and knowledge of small regional, city or town archives and their archivists was vital, demonstrating what a key resource these are.

One vessel was registered in Cardigan, but not within Lloyd's. An internet search found that the port registry for Cardigan extended back to 1790 (three years before this ship was wrecked) and copies were in both Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion Archives. Within two hours of requesting information on the registry from Ceredigion Archives they sent a copy of the document showing that the ship had been built in Aberystwyth in 1789 and was wrecked on its return from its maiden voyage ("The skipper can't have been popular with the owners", the archivist added).

And with that the *Emlyn* was removed from the list of candidates. It may be that a ship registered in Cardigan was unlikely to have been built in the south of England, but ships were traded themselves, so it was important to find out the place of construction, where possible.

The 3D modelling of the hull section prior to disassembly enabled an estimation of the size of the ship in comparison to some of the shipbuilding treatises that survive from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Floor timbers, the lowest of the framing timbers that were perpendicular to the keel, had a gradual and reasonably uniform curve, which meant there was little sign of the hull narrowing towards the stern of the bow within the preserved section, and so it must have represented less than half of the overall length of the ship, and a similar amount of the beam (width).

These two measurements were used to work out the tonnage of the ship, through an equation called Old Builders Measurement, which became the standard during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The end result was a ship that could have been up to 32m in length, 10.5m in beam, and up to 800 tons (although somewhere between 300 and 600 was more likely).

Once the researchers combined their work into the origins of the ships on the list with the information on likely size, possible candidates began to tumble like ninepins. Many of the ships were built and based in Liverpool, the Cumbrian ports of Maryport, Whitehaven, and Workington, or from the east coast ports of Whitby, South Shields, and Hull, all unlikely to be using southern English timber.

Most of the remaining ships were built in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, or Germany. Almost all of the remaining vessels were less than 200 tons. In fact, bringing all of these strands together, only one ship remained as a possibility: The London whaler, *Earl of Chatham*.

Right: The timbers are prepared ahead of being placed in the tank at Sanday Heritage Centre

ORKNEY ISLANDS COUNCIL [2]

Right: Timbers from the Sanday wreck being placed in a freshwater tank for preservation at the Sanday Heritage Centre

The Sanday Shipwreck Survey included ships built in Finland, Russia, Spain, the American colonies, as well as France and the Netherlands. One ship, the Taindale of Maryport, managed to wreck twice in Sanday, once in 1773, where it was salvaged, and more permanently in 1778.

A lucky ship in peace, war and whaling

The Lloyd's entry for *Earl of Chatham* listed its build location as King's Yard and gave no date for build. King's Yard denoted Deptford Royal Dockyard and latterly came to mean all naval dockyards. Naval origins were confirmed by the *Aberdeen Journal*'s report of its loss: "It was a frigate in the last war."

Further research into the Board of Trade registers at the National Archives in Kew revealed that, prior to 1784, the ship had been the sixth-rate frigate HMS *Hind*. This ship was built in Chitty & Vernon's West Itchenor yard in Chichester in 1749 and commissioned in Portsmouth Dockyard in 1753.

It had a long and varied naval career, including periods on the Caribbean station, the North American station, where it took part in the sieges of Louisburg and Quebec, and extensive convoy escort duty in European waters.

It went through multiple repairs over its long career, always in either Plymouth or Portsmouth, before being converted to an armed transport in 1780 and eventually sold out to the navy, to T Pritzler & Co, in January 1784. After four successful seasons in the Davis Straits under Captain William Brown, the ship was on its first voyage under Captain Paterson when it was wrecked on the Sands o'Erraby, in March 1788.

Local folklore suggests this was down to witchcraft, with the first mate of the ship seeing the local witch, Ship Maggie, dancing on the rigging, willing the ship onto the shore. She must've had a soft spot for them, however, as all 56 onboard survived. But then it was always a lucky ship.

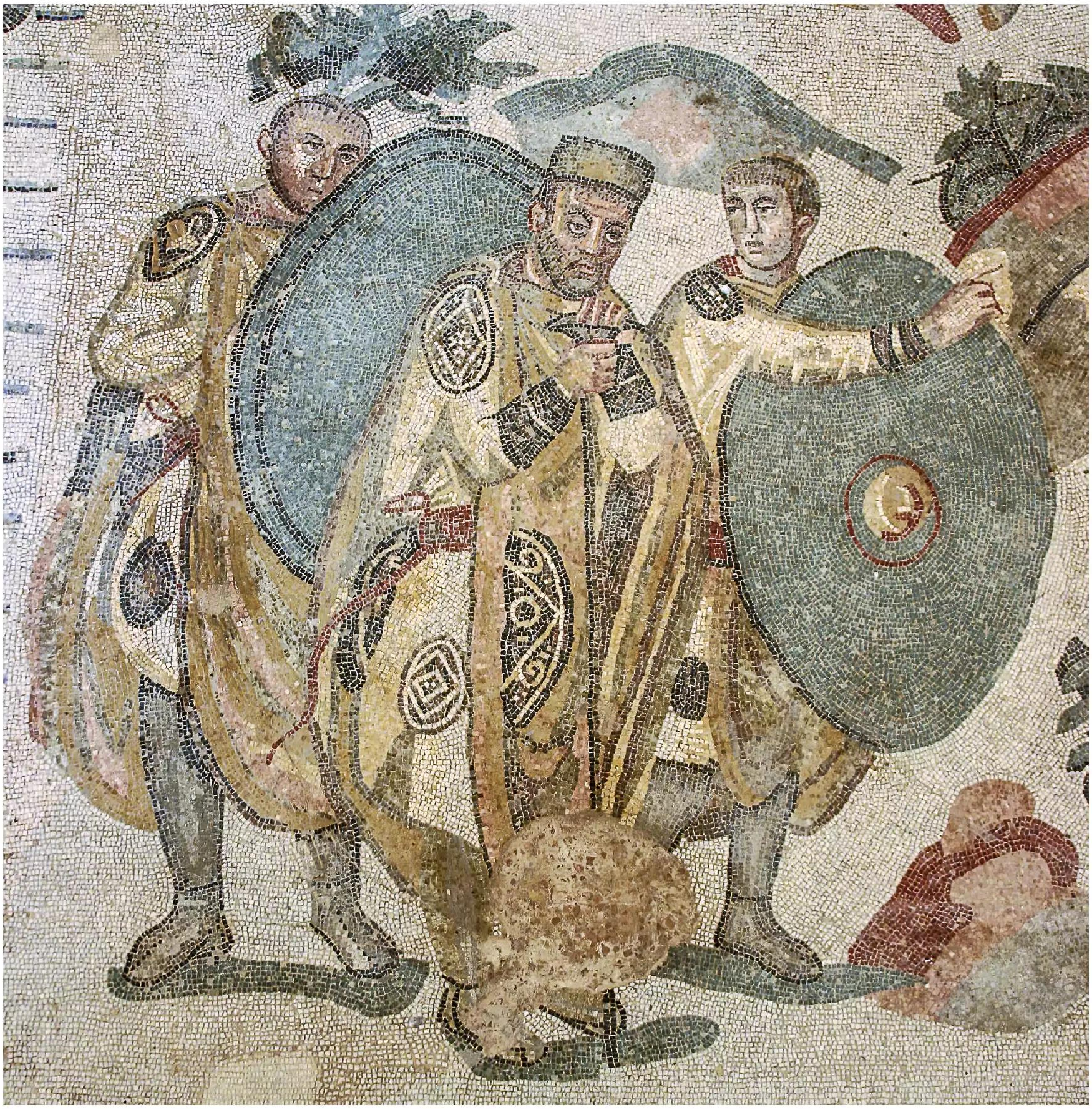
A long and distinguished naval career with lots of prizes taken; a short but successful whaling career, with at least 15 whales caught in four seasons; a relatively lucky wrecking with all surviving; and then surviving all this time to be found by a community who cared deeply about the wreck and were determined to do what they could to find out more. And to be wrecked in Sanday as well, a place famed for its hospitality to wreck mariners. Can't say luckier than that.

The Old Statistical Account for Scotland noted that Sanday was well known among ship captains as a lucky place to wreck, with one saying, "If I was to be wrecked anywhere, let it be Sanday."

The successful conclusion of this project is down to the hard work and tenacity of all involved. The result is not just the chance to tell the story of the Sanday wreck, but also that of *Earl of Chatham* and HMS *Hind*, and to add more details to the stories of several hundred other wrecks.

It has developed researching and recording skills in the community in a way that means that when the next wreck is found on the shores of Sanday, and it won't be long, the community can do essential rapid work to record it and lead in the research of it. ■

The twilight of Roman Britain



JOSÉ LUIZ BERNARDES RIBEIRO

The end of Roman Britain is a fascinating and often misunderstood period. Too often, we view these events with the benefit, and distortion, of hindsight. Richard Henry looks at this changeable period in Britain's history through the lens of Late Roman small finds and adornments. Can personal objects provide new perspectives on status, identity, and social transformation during the decline of the Romano-British period and the change that followed?

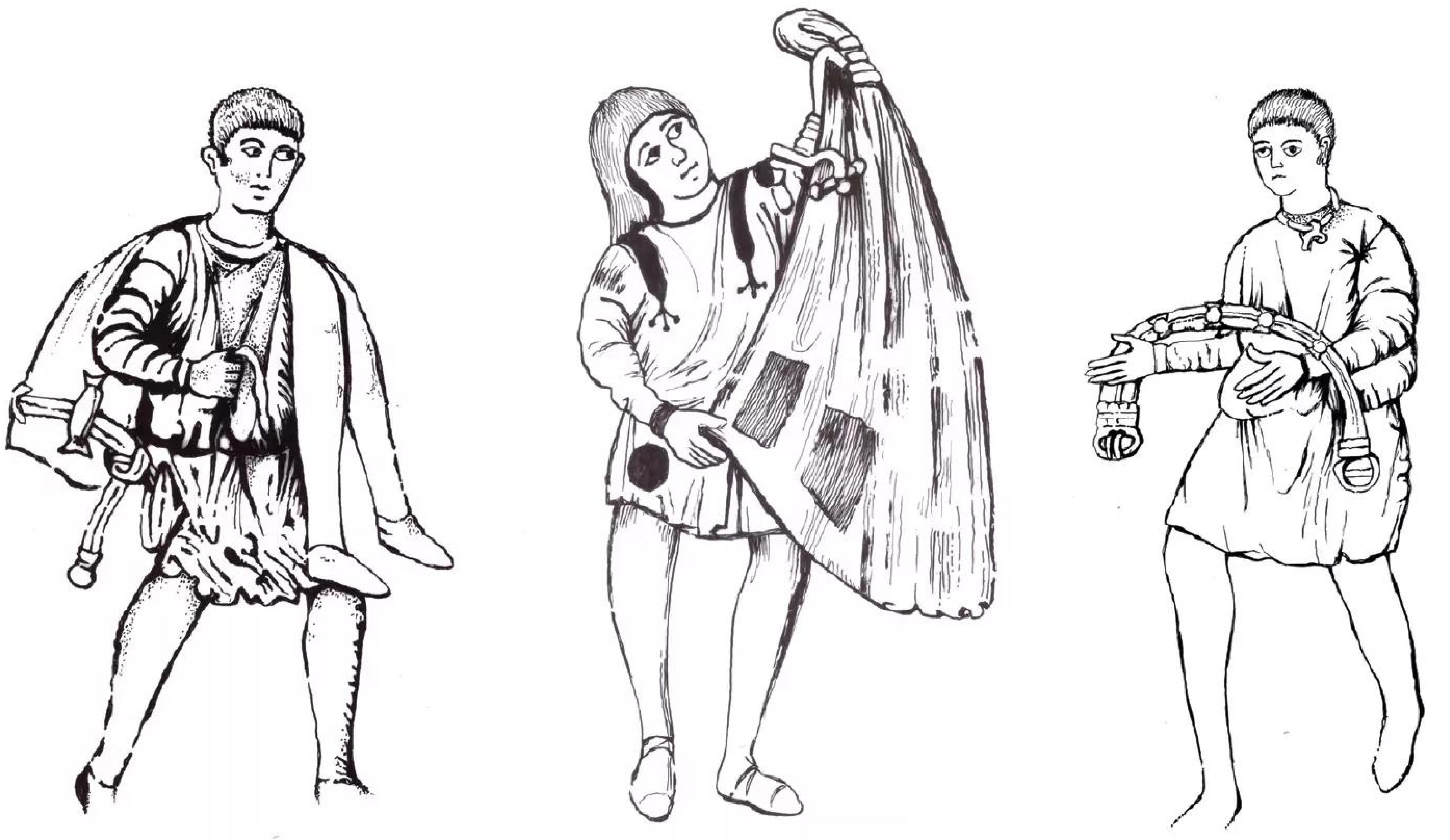
Traditional interpretations have long framed this period as one of abrupt collapse, with Roman Britain supposedly descending into chaos. We now know that Roman Britain failed and that the Western Empire eventually fell, but the people living through these years had no such foresight.

Instead, the evidence suggests repeated attempts to maintain a sense of normality and continuity as elements of Roman administration, economy, and identity persisted for a time, before fragmenting and giving way to something entirely different.

My interest in this late Roman world was sparked during my time as Finds Liaison Officer for Wiltshire, where I recorded a wide range of artefacts, many dating to the fourth century. Among them were the distinctive fittings from late Roman belt sets. They are quirky, eye-catching pieces decorated with dolphins, horses, griffins, peacocks, and stylised human heads.

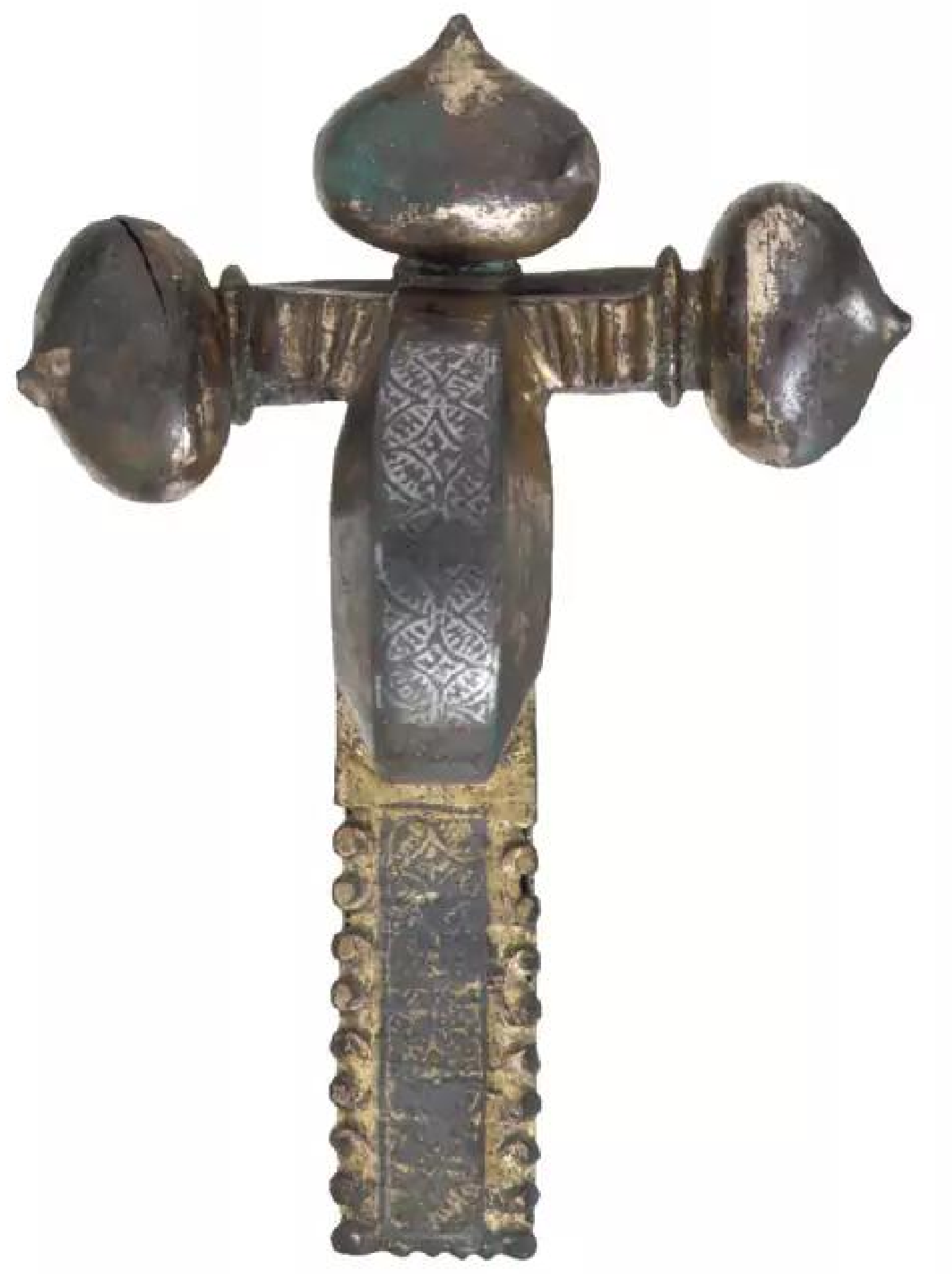
Many of the fittings made in Britain were worn by just a single generation, appearing around 390 and falling out of widespread use by about 425. Far from being merely functional, these objects were statements of identity, worn by people navigating a society in the midst of profound political, cultural, and social change.

This particular group of finds formed the foundation of my research into how people expressed status and identity through dress and personal adornment during the final decades of Roman rule and the early post-Roman period.



NICK GRIFFITHS

Above: Figure 2 – Various servants depicted in the frescos on the Silistra Tomb in Bulgaria. To the left the servant holds their master's trousers and shoes, in the centre their cloak to which a crossbow brooch is attached, and to the right the servant holds the cingulum militare



THE MET MUSEUM

Right: Figure 3 – A gilded copper-alloy Type 5i crossbow brooch decorated with niello – unprovenanced (not to scale)

Overambition

At first, my scope was overambitious: I aimed to examine all types of late Roman objects and coins across Britain. Coins particularly interested me, as they offer precise dating and wide distribution, making them an excellent baseline for comparing other material culture. In Britain, we also see silver coins being clipped, and I would argue by the same high-status elites who wore much of this distinctive dress equipment.

I eventually refined my focus to a core group of object types: crossbow brooches, late Roman belt fittings, penannular brooches, spurs, coins, and coin hoards. These objects were widely used by key segments of late Roman society, particularly the military, members of the imperial or civic administration, and local elites who were increasingly managing life in the provinces. By examining the distribution and deposition of these objects, my research looked to illuminate the lived experience of individuals during this period of transformation.

How long did Roman ways of dress and displaying of status persist after official ties with the empire were severed? Were there regional patterns in how Roman forms of material culture were adopted, adapted, or abandoned? And what do these patterns reveal about the emergence of new political and cultural identities in fifth-century Britain?

Evidence suggests that while some objects, such as crossbow brooches and spurs, disappear relatively quickly, others, like belt fittings and penannular brooches, continue, sometimes well into the post-Roman period, though with evolving forms and meanings.

Coin hoards, too, provide important insights, reflecting both the ongoing use of Roman currency and the shifting political and economic landscape that followed the collapse of Roman taxation and payment systems.

Opposite page: Figure 1 - A late Roman official and two soldiers from the Villa de Romana del Casale villa in Sicily. The official is wearing a crossbow brooch on their right shoulder

Ethnic boundary theory

Even within this more focused framework, working with large datasets presented considerable challenges. In archaeology, big data can be both a gift and a curse: It allows us to uncover broad patterns that might otherwise remain invisible, yet the sheer volume of information can obscure the very narratives we are trying to reveal. I spent several months wrestling with how best to analyse my data in ways that would not simply quantify it but bring out the key stories it had to tell.

One particularly helpful perspective came from a suggestion by James Gerrard to approach this period in time and how to interpret these objects by using ethnic boundary theory, first proposed by Fredrik Barth in 1969. It suggests that what defines a group is not fixed cultural traits but the social boundaries people create.

Although originally developed to study ethnicity, Barth's framework has far broader applications and is particularly useful for thinking about identity during periods of upheaval and transition. Over the past 50 years, scholarship has shifted away from rigid definitions of identity, tied to ethnicity or origin, and towards more dynamic understandings of identity as something shaped by context, relationships, and change.

In the late Roman world, for example, elite identity at the imperial level was sustained through a complex web of patronage, shared education, and ceremonial display, with the emperor at the centre. Patronage is networks of power built on exchange of favours and loyalty. For individuals on the ground, soldiers, administrators, or local elite landowners, identity was also shaped by localised factors: Community, religion, region, personal networks, and, of course, dress and material culture.

Boundary shift and drift

Ethnic boundary theory introduces two particularly useful concepts: Boundary shift and boundary drift. These describe how perceived boundaries between groups, whether ethnic, cultural, or social, can change over time. A boundary shift refers to a rapid, often deliberate, redefinition of identity, usually in response to sudden change.

Boundary drift, on the other hand, describes slower, more organic transformations, the kind that occur almost unnoticed over a generation or more. I became especially interested in how these ideas might be explored through material culture. Could certain objects, patterns of deposition, or stylistic changes help trace how people navigated the shifting social landscape of post-Roman Britain? In many cases, I believe they can.

As Roman institutions collapsed and central authority withdrew, people were forced to renegotiate their place in the world. Some responses may have been consciously political: Adapting aspects of Roman norms, dress, and display; ultimately asserting new allegiances or emerging identities. Others were subtler: Local traditions gradually reinterpreted, or habits that had once carried imperial resonance losing their meaning over time.

In this context, material culture becomes a powerful way to explore not only what people owned, but how they saw themselves, and how those perceptions evolved in the wake of Rome's decline. What emerges is not a sudden rupture, but a patchwork of responses: In some areas, continuity; in others, innovation or reinvention.

What can personal objects tell us about the past?

To explore how identity was expressed through personal dress and equipment, I focused on four key types of late Roman material culture: Crossbow brooches; belt fittings; penannular brooches; and spurs. Each provides insight into how different groups used specific items to signal their status and identity.

These objects were produced and worn during the later fourth and early fifth centuries, a time when fashion, particularly among the elite, was becoming increasingly militarised. Regional leaders and imperial officials alike adopted and adapted visual styles associated with the Roman military to communicate authority and affiliation.

This shift complicates efforts to assign these objects to specific social or occupational groups. Bureaucrats, landowners, and military personnel all drew on a shared visual repertoire to project power and prestige.

Although it might be tempting to associate these objects primarily with active soldiers stationed in Britain, they were also worn by members of the state bureaucracy. In the late Roman world, administrative officials often held military rank and were entitled to wear elements of uniform. This blurs the distinction between soldier and civilian official in the archaeological record, since both groups used the same dress accessories, making it difficult to separate them through material culture alone. Furthermore, high-status elites also embraced military fashions.

By the fourth century, Roman soldiers no longer resembled the legionaries familiar from popular culture. Both soldiers and state officials typically wore tight-fitting trousers, a tunic, and a short cloak known as the chlamys, often fastened at the shoulder with a crossbow brooch (Figure 1). A wide and often elaborate belt (cingulum militare) was worn at the waist (Figure 2).

Although the textiles themselves rarely survive in Britain, the metal fittings, such as buckles, strap-ends, and brooches do. These surviving items provide vital clues about how individuals dressed, displayed rank, and expressed membership of particular groups.

The increasing militarisation of elite dress makes interpreting the archaeological record even more complex. Most of the objects that survive come from individuals we might class as honestiores: The privileged classes who had access to high-status goods. The humiliores, or lower classes, are often archaeologically invisible by comparison. This is especially true in areas dominated by pastoral economies, where distinctive dress accessories are scarcer and where individuals may have adopted alternative, possibly non-Roman, styles of self-presentation.

Many of the object types I examined, particularly belt fittings, have often been studied in isolation. A core part of my research involved bringing these strands together. I combined multiple object corpora to build a more holistic picture, systematically recording data on their manufacture, spatial distribution, and archaeological context, whether from towns, forts, villas, hoards, or rural settlements.

By comparing these object types side by side, I aimed to gain deeper insight into the communities who used them, and how they chose to express identity at the edge of empire.

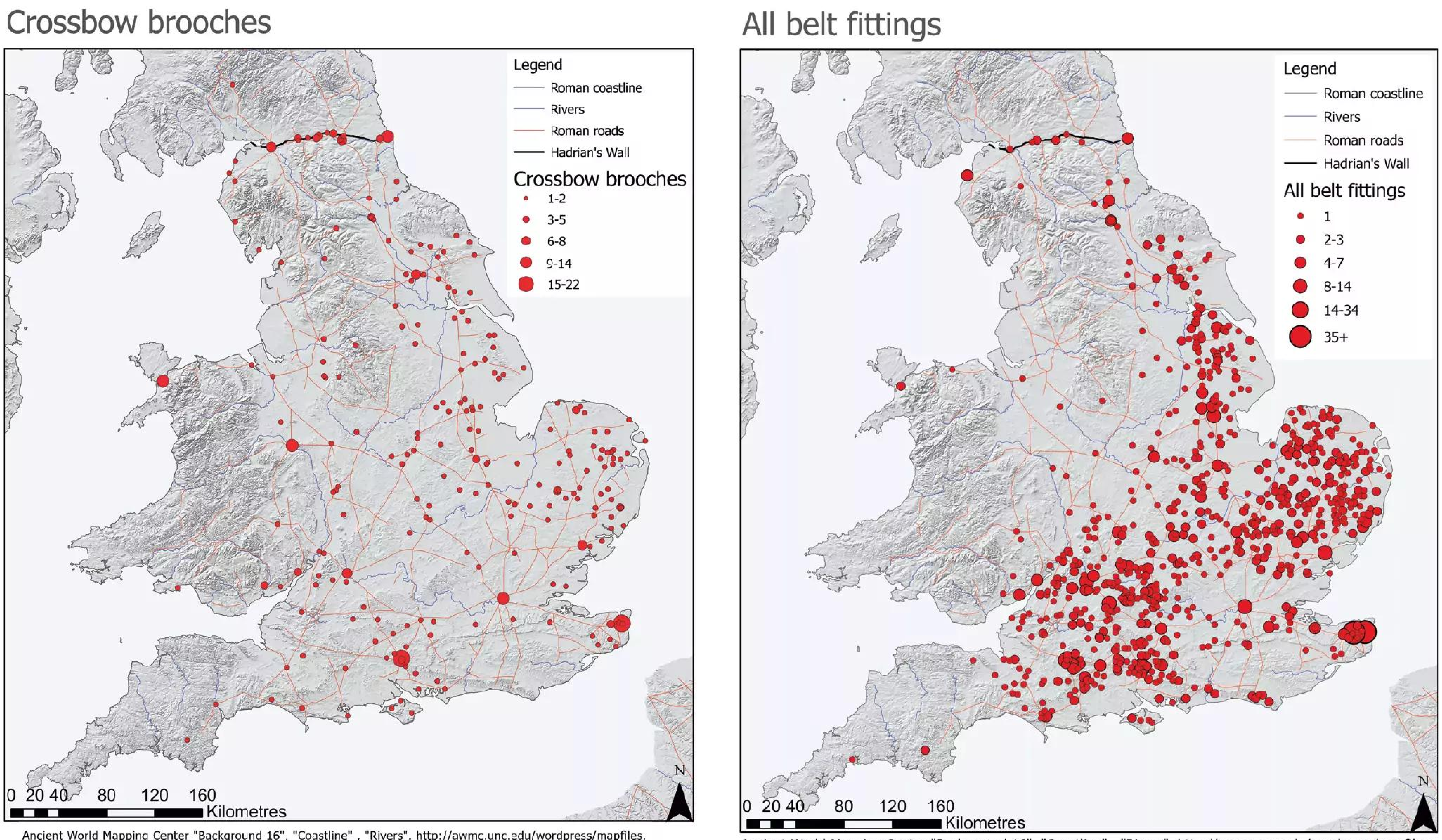
The crossbow brooch

Crossbow brooches are among the most recognisable dress accessories of late Roman Britain. Distinguished by their wide, arching bow and robust construction, these brooches were designed to fasten cloaks securely, often holding substantial amounts of textile, such as heavy wool or layered garments. They were more than just functional objects; they were potent symbols of rank and affiliation, worn during a time when personal appearance conveyed powerful messages about identity, allegiance, and status.

There are six principal types of crossbow brooch, distinguished by their form and method of manufacture. The earlier types (Type 1, 2, and 3/4) were cast, often in copper alloy or precious metals, and tend to be more substantial. The later Type 5 and 6 brooches, by contrast, were made from sheet metal, making them lighter and more suitable for fastening fine fabrics, like linen or silk, without causing damage (Figure 3).

Some of these brooches were sewn directly onto garments, and even when broken they continued to hold symbolic significance. Many were repaired and reused extensively, and some fragmentary or damaged examples appear as grave goods long after their original manufacture. For example, Type 1 brooches, which first appeared around AD 290, continued to be deposited in burials at least 60 years later.

A regional analysis conducted by Ellen Swift revealed intriguing patterns in the distribution of crossbow brooch types across the northwestern Roman provinces. Britain stands out in particular, with Type 1 brooches far more common here than elsewhere in the



Ancient World Mapping Center "Background 16", "Coastline" , "Rivers". http://awmc.unc.edu/wordpress/mapfiles.
Roman road network based on Margary (1973).

Ancient World Mapping Center "Background 16", "Coastline" , "Rivers". http://awmc.unc.edu/wordpress/mapfiles.
Roman road network based on Margary (1973).

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empire. When their distribution is compared against the settlement hierarchy, the reason becomes clearer.

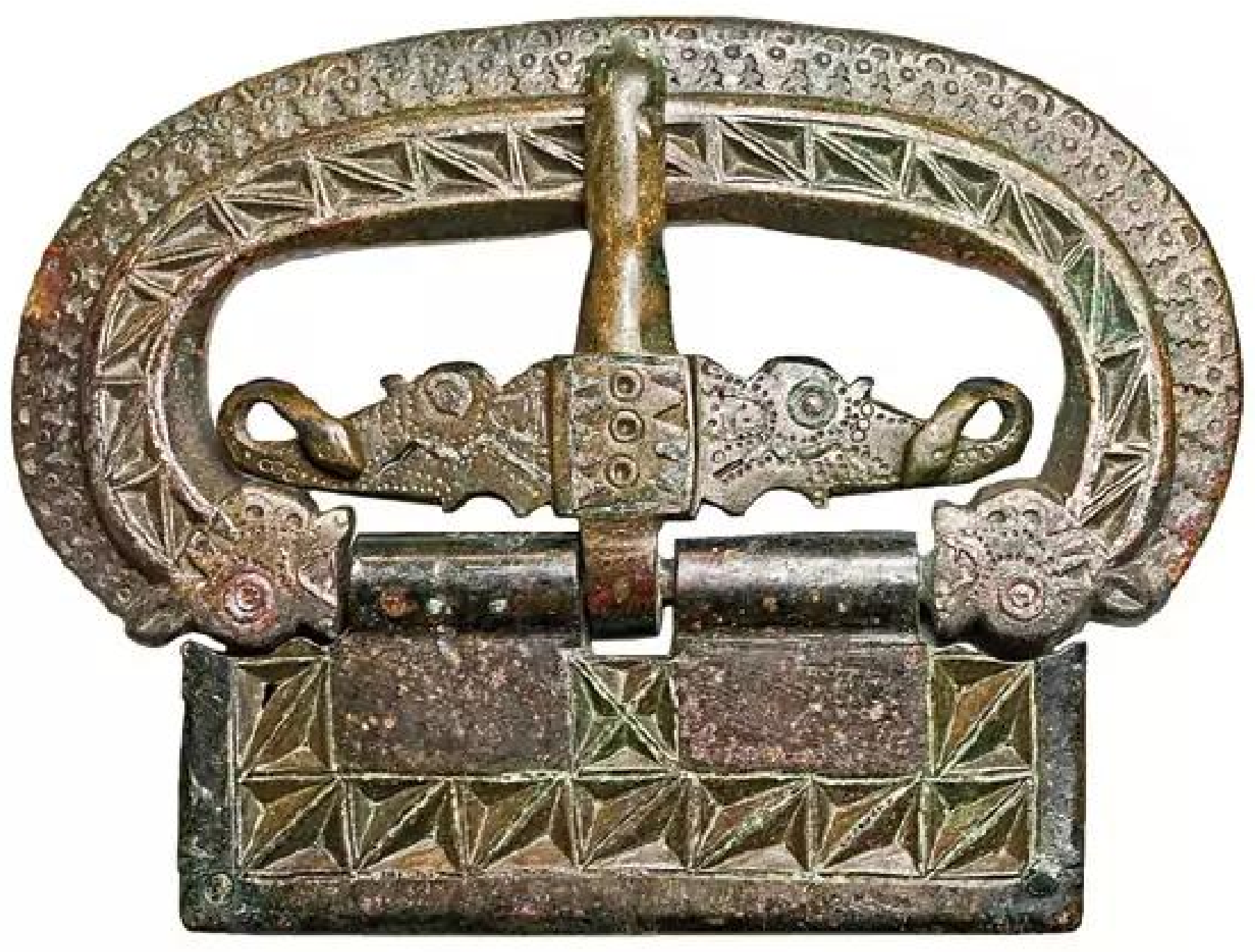
Type 1 brooches are significantly more prevalent on Hadrian's Wall and other military sites, whereas urban and rural contexts across Britain tend to yield higher numbers of Type 3/4 brooches. This suggests a different user base, possibly linked more closely to civilian life and local administration.

By the later fourth and into the fifth century, we begin to see a noticeable shift in both the style and distribution of crossbow brooches. The emergence of the lighter, sheet-metal Types 5 and 6 is particularly striking, with these types first appearing around AD 390.

They are far more common in the southern and eastern parts of Britain, and tend to be found at rural sites. This is not simply a quirk of survival or recording; it reflects broader changes in the late Roman landscape. By this point, these regions had become the agricultural heartlands of Britain, producing the grain and other supplies that were extracted as tax to feed the wider empire.

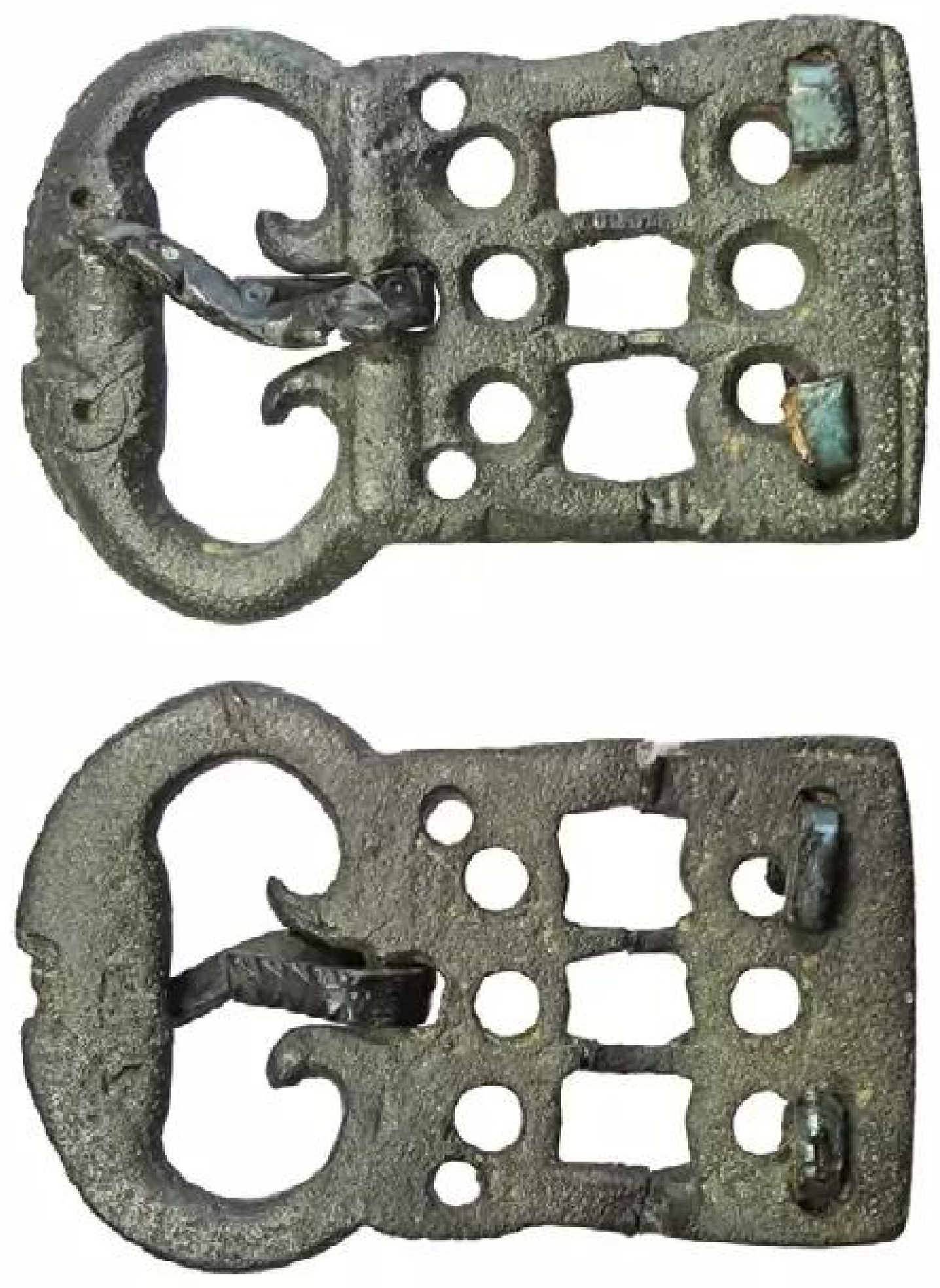
This changing pattern in brooch use tells us something important about who was wearing what and why. Type 1 brooches, so common on military sites and especially along Hadrian's Wall, appear to have been closely tied to the army and frontier zones. In contrast, the more widespread Type 3/4 brooches are often found in both urban and rural settings, particularly in areas where the machinery of the late Roman state still functioned. These were the places where tax was collected, goods redistributed, and administration carried out. It is likely that the people wearing these brooches included local officials, tax collectors, and other members of the late Roman bureaucracy.

Above: Left (Figure 4), the distribution of all crossbow brooches in Britain; right: (Figure 7), the distribution of all belt fittings in Britain



Right: Figure 5 – The Type IIIA buckle from Dorchester of Thames excavated by Oxford Archaeology (not to scale)

MAGDALENA WACHNIK



Right: Figure 6 – A copper-alloy Hawkes and Dunning Type IIB buckle which has been repaired. The buckle pin and rivets are made from reused fragments of Roman bracelets. This buckle is from Childrey, Oxfordshire (not to scale)

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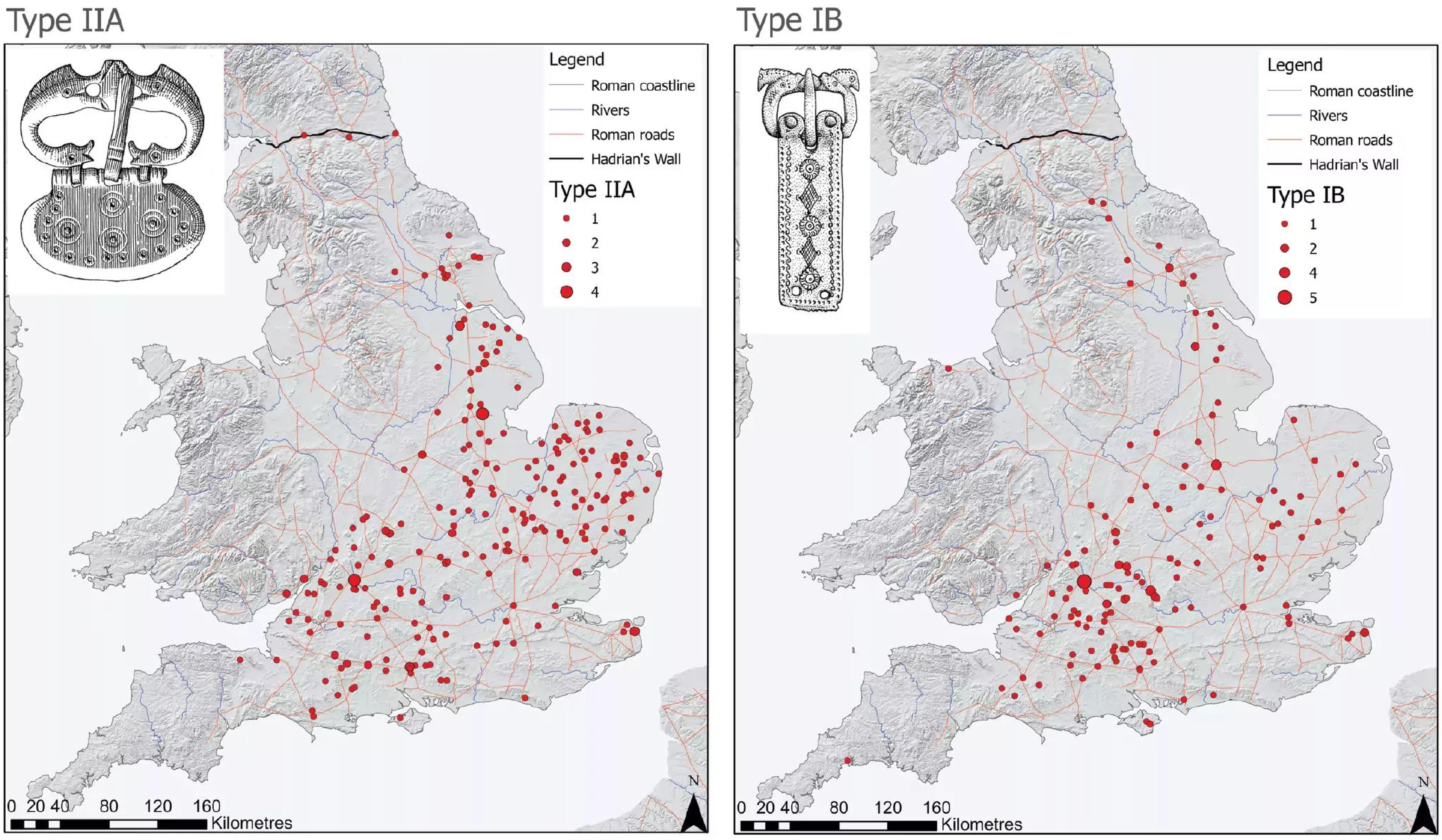
The cingulum militare

The cingulum militare (the military belt) was far more than a practical accessory. It was a visible marker of status and rank, closely associated with the late Roman military and administrative elite. Typically made of leather and fitted with a range of decorative metal components, the belt's appearance varied widely depending on its type and context.

In Britain, the foundational typology still in use was developed by Sonia Hawkes and Gerald Dunning in 1961. However, their system focuses only on zoomorphic examples and does not fully reflect the diversity of fittings found across the province. In reality, the variety of styles, materials, and methods of manufacture suggests a much more complex picture.

Britain has far greater variation in belt fittings, including certain forms that appear to be unique to the provinces here (by this time there were at least four provinces in Britain). This suggests the existence of an insular tradition of cingulum militare, possibly worn by members of the local elite



Above: Figure 8 – The distribution of Type IIA and Type IB buckles

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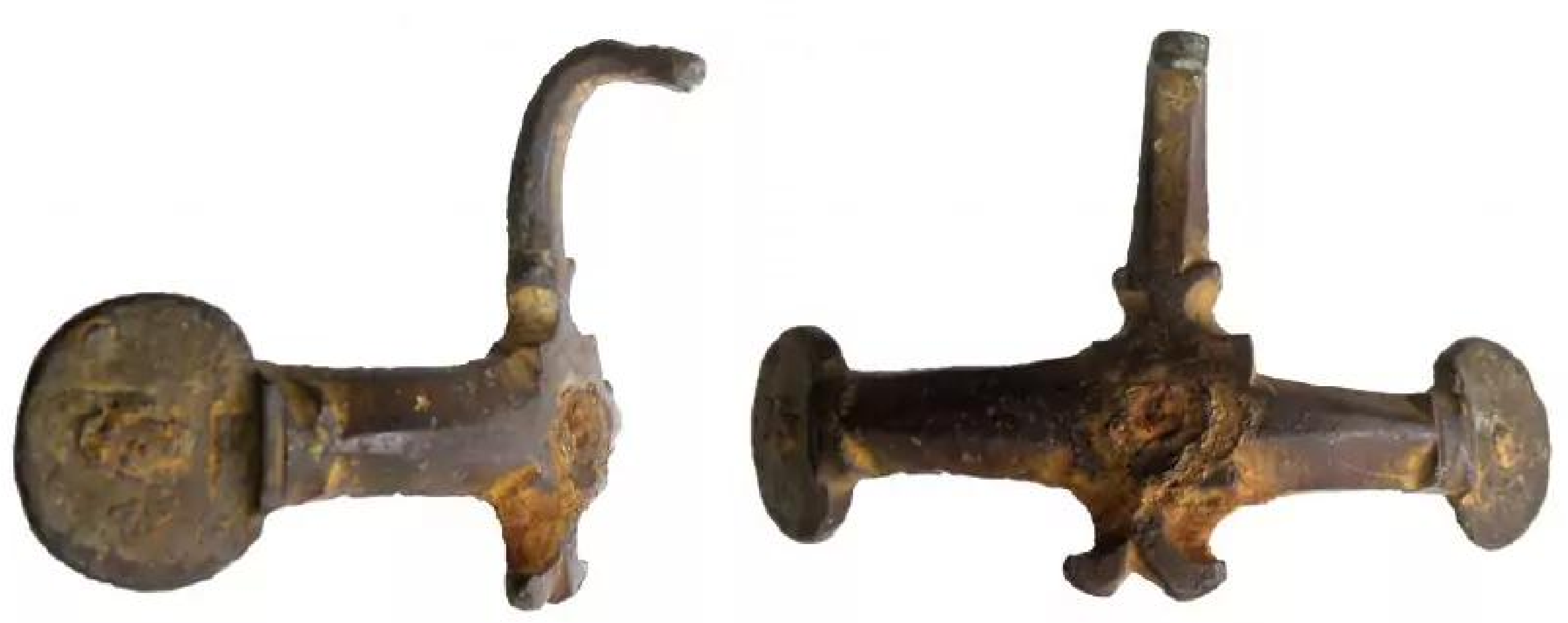
emulating the visual language of Roman officialdom.

However, until more examples are discovered in late Roman burials to confirm associations between belt types and specific social groups, this idea remains a working hypothesis. What is clear from the existing evidence is an increasing militarisation of elite dress, mirroring patterns seen elsewhere in the late Roman world and visually aligning local elites with the structures and symbolism of state power.

These belts begin to appear in the archaeological record around 350, with distinctive insular versions emerging from about 370 onward. Current typologies, however, can be misleading. Hawkes and Dunning's classification relies heavily on stylistic traits rather than stratified archaeological dating. As a result, the Type I belt fittings are generally later than Type II forms.

Certain forms of late Roman objects retained their power and significance even when repaired. One striking example is a buckle from Oxfordshire. After the original rivets and pin were damaged, broken fragments of Roman bracelets were repurposed to reattach the object to the belt, giving it a second life, while preserving its symbolic value.

Below: Figure 9 – A late Roman spur from Norfolk (not to scale)



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Unlike crossbow brooches, which tend to be more closely associated with military contexts, belt fittings are far more numerous, with over 1,300 late Roman examples recorded in Britain, and appear to have been used by a broader cross-section of society.

Their distribution is also different. Instead of clustering along the northern frontier, most are found south of the Severn Estuary and the Humber. This pattern is partly chronological, as belt fittings generally date from 350 onwards, while the crossbow brooches most closely tied to military zones are usually earlier.

Interestingly, far fewer belt fittings are found on military sites, while they are more commonly recovered from urban and rural contexts. This may reflect differences in both the time and place of manufacture. Certain regions, notably Wiltshire, Somerset, and the East Midlands, show a higher frequency of insular types, which likely indicates local production. These distribution patterns align closely with the dispersal of coins from around AD 350, supporting the idea that these areas were centres of sustained economic and administrative activity in the late Roman period.

We also see variation based on production phases. Type IIA buckles begin appearing around 350 and are concentrated in East Anglia. In contrast, Type IB buckles appear slightly later, from around 390, and are notably less common in that region. This narrowing of distribution mirrors broader changes seen in other material and monetary evidence, including the contraction of coin circulation at the very end of the fourth century.

Spurs

While the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) regularly records large numbers of medieval and post-medieval spurs, Roman examples are strikingly rare. For much of the Roman period in Britain, spurs were not a standard part of cavalry equipment. Instead, they seem to have emerged as a distinctive object type only in the later fourth century.

Late Roman prick spurs are easy to recognise. They typically feature rounded terminals, often with a central perforation, and come in two main forms. The first, described by Giesler as Type C, includes a circular loop above the spur's point. The second, Type D, has a projecting hook instead (see Figure 9 for an example).

The question of who used these spurs has prompted some debate. Some researchers link them to late Roman military personnel, while others suggest a connection with elite hunting practices. In either case, their distribution differs significantly from better-known items, such as crossbow brooches and belt fittings.

Although only 88 examples of Roman spurs have been recorded from Britain, their spatial pattern is striking. They cluster along key Roman roads, especially Dere Street and Ermine Street, and are particularly common along the east coast between Lincoln and Hadrian's Wall. This pattern contrasts with the broader distributions of other late Roman dress accessories and suggests a more focused and specialised use.

These objects have been linked to the late Roman field army known as the comitatenses.

The presence and duration of the comitatenses in Britain remains debated. They are not mentioned by the historian Ammianus Marcellinus in his account of the so-called Barbarian Conspiracy of 367, which might suggest that they were not stationed in the province at that time.

However, they do appear in the Notitia Dignitatum, an early fifth-century administrative document that records three separate army commands in Britain. This has led some scholars to propose that the comitatenses were introduced during the 390s, although exactly when they left is still uncertain.

Some argue for a withdrawal before the turn of the century, while others place their departure in the first decade of the fifth century.

Coins

At first glance, it may seem unusual to include coinage in a study focused on material culture and changing status. However, coins are invaluable for two key reasons.

First, most object types cannot be dated precisely, often spanning decades or even generations, whereas the currency reforms of the later fourth century allow coins to be refined to much narrower timeframes. This makes their distribution patterns an excellent baseline for comparison.

For example, the distribution of Type IIA belt sets closely matches coinage from the 350s to 370s, while the later Type IB buckles align more closely with coinage issued in the 390s. This further emphasises how atypical the distribution of spurs is.

Second, coins were not just currency; they were a material expression of imperial systems of power and status. Gold and silver denominations were used to pay the servants of the state, such as soldiers, officials, and elites, and were then reclaimed through taxation. This makes them a direct indicator of where wealth and authority were concentrated.

In this context, the prevalence of clipped silver siliquae in Britain is particularly fascinating. Heavy clipping of silver coins appears to have begun towards the end of the first decade of the fifth century. Peter Guest identified four stages of clipping, ranging from CF1 (lightly clipped) to CF4 (heavily clipped), to help assess how and when these coins were cut down (Figure 11).

It is important to remember that there was power in the imperial portrait. Deliberately cutting a coin and removing parts of the inscription or the portrait itself could be interpreted as a symbolic act, suggesting a collapse of central power. However, the evidence from Britain tells a different story.

I analysed over 2,000 coins recorded with the PAS, looking at both the degree of clipping and the period in which the coins were minted. Whether in Devon or County Durham, the patterns were remarkably consistent.

Clipping should not be seen as evidence of a population in disarray. Instead, it demonstrates that central authority, or at least centralised systems of control, continued to function. The distribution of these coins also closely mirrors that of the objects worn by the generation we examined earlier, reinforcing the idea that elites were actively managing currency and maintaining aspects of Roman economic practice during this period of transition.

Changing status at the end of Roman Britain

The end of Roman Britain remains the subject of intense debate, often framed in terms of continuity, collapse, or transformation. Continuity, in this context, refers to more than the survival of settlements or infrastructure; it considers whether Roman socio-economic and institutional frameworks persisted into the fifth century.

Narratives focusing on collapse present a rapid disintegration of these systems, while transformation models suggest a more gradual, regionally variable process in which change unfolded in stages, rather than all at once.

Material culture provides one of the best ways to explore these dynamics. Artefacts allow us to assess whether change was abrupt or incremental, and to identify the people and processes that drove those changes. Concepts, such as boundary shift and boundary drift, help explain how some objects persisted, others disappeared, and others still were reimagined to fit new social and political realities.

A consistent theme across the evidence is the extended life of many late Roman objects. Even when damaged or repaired, they retained their meaning and symbolic value. A grave at Lankhills cemetery in Winchester illustrates this well: The burial contained silver belt fittings, spurs, and an inscribed but broken crossbow brooch. Such burials show how these items functioned as potent markers of identity and status well into the later fourth century.

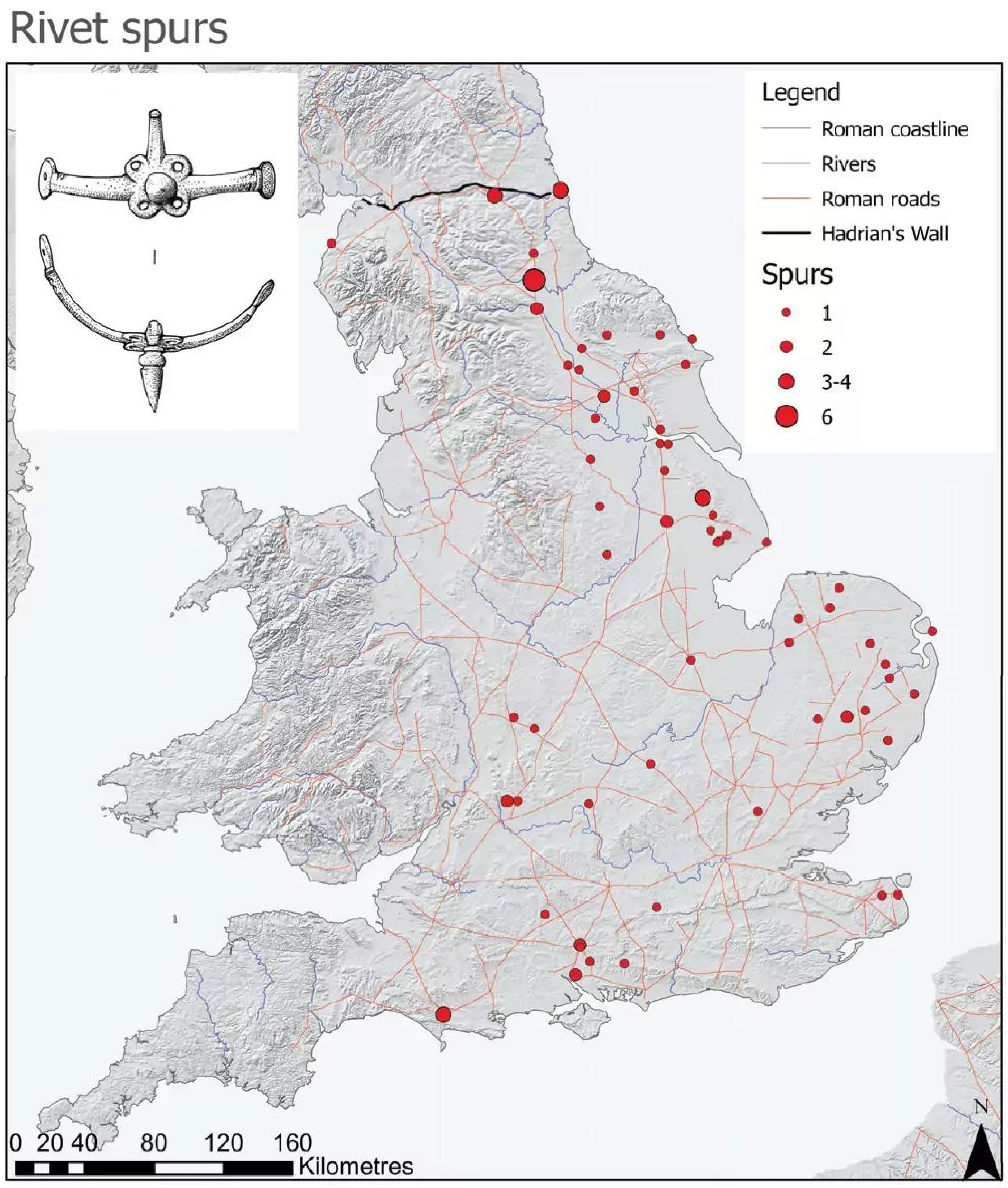
By the mid-fifth century, however, spurs and crossbow brooches vanish from the archaeological record, their symbolic power lost as the social and political structures that had given them meaning collapsed.

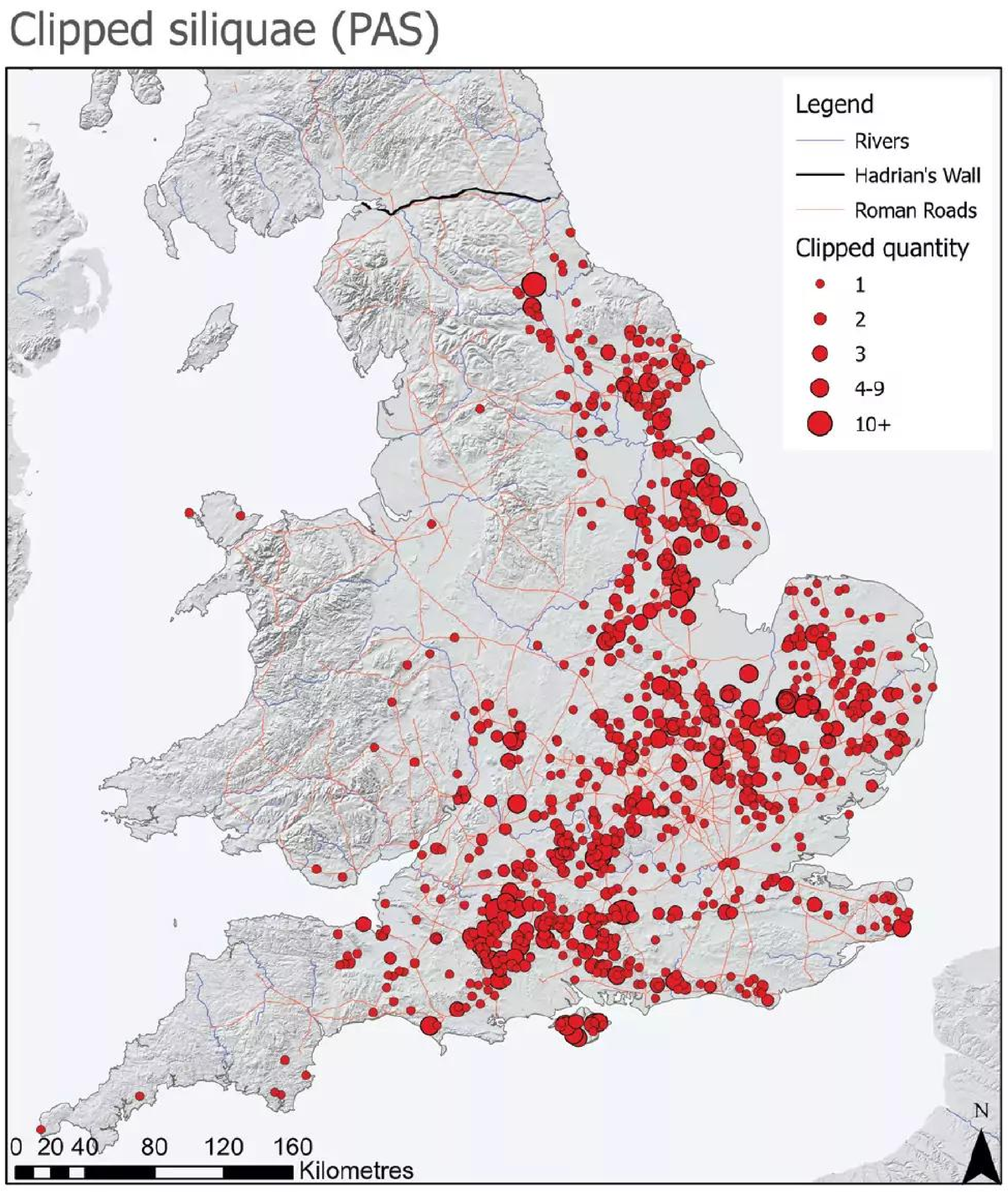
Belt fittings tell a different story. Their use persisted beyond the end of Roman rule, but how, and by whom they were worn, changed. In the late fourth century, they were primarily associated with male dress and official rank. By the fifth century, they appear in burials of both men and women, and insular forms become more prominent.

This shift suggests that belt fittings had been recontextualised. They were no longer exclusive markers of those linked to imperial service in some form but part of a localised language of status and allegiance.

Coins add a vital layer to this picture. The distribution of clipped siliquae closely mirrors that of these late Roman belt fittings, particularly the Type IB and Tortworth strap ends, showing that coins and dress accessories were both part of a shared material vocabulary used by elites during the years of transition.

Clipping, rather than signalling disarray, suggests deliberate





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Above left: Figure 10 – The distribution of spurs in Britain

Above right: Figure 12 – The distribution of clipped siliquae recorded with the PAS

adaptation. Elite groups appear to have controlled and managed currency, keeping elements of the Roman economic system functioning locally even as central authority waned.

Gresham's Law helps explain these patterns. High-quality, unclipped coins were withdrawn from circulation more quickly than the heavily clipped examples, meaning that the areas with the densest deposits of clipped hoards represent the regions where coin use persisted the longest. These include Wiltshire, Somerset, Hampshire, East Anglia, and the area around York. These hoards provide powerful evidence that in some regions, coinage continued to function as part of the economy and possibly in support of taxation practices well into the fifth century.

It is striking that many of these regions also produce hoards containing a mix of precious and base metal coins. The Bishops Cannings hoard from Wiltshire, for example, includes both silver and bronze denominations, suggesting that nummi may have continued to circulate alongside silver and even gold until at least 425. This supports the idea that local elites were striving to sustain familiar economic systems during a time of upheaval, adapting Roman practices to fit a rapidly changing world.

Other regions present different stories. In Cirencester and parts of the Britannia Prima province, for example, there are fewer clipped siliquae but higher concentrations of late Roman belt fittings and penannular brooches. This may reflect the continued use of bronze currency or other localised systems of exchange, as well as a slower pace of change in social practices.

In these regions, it seems that the belts they wore also differed in style, perhaps made of fabric, rather than leather, based on the general absence of the stiffeners used on leather belts. In pastoral regions, such as the southwest, Wales, and the West Midlands, coin use and certain elite dress fittings are far less common. Where such objects do occur, they likely represent mobility or exchange rather than local systems of display or administration.

These patterns show that there was no single trajectory at the end of Roman Britain. In some areas, imperial systems faded quickly; in others, elites adapted, sustaining aspects of Roman identity and economy for decades after the official end of imperial rule.

By around 445, however, these efforts had ceased. Coinage was reduced to bullion, and many aspects of Romano-British culture, from urban life to cooking practices, underwent profound transformation. Smaller objects, therefore, tell us part of the story of a single generation navigating profound change. Coins, belt fittings, brooches, and other artefacts reveal how people adapted familiar symbols and systems to sustain a sense of continuity even as imperial structures faded.

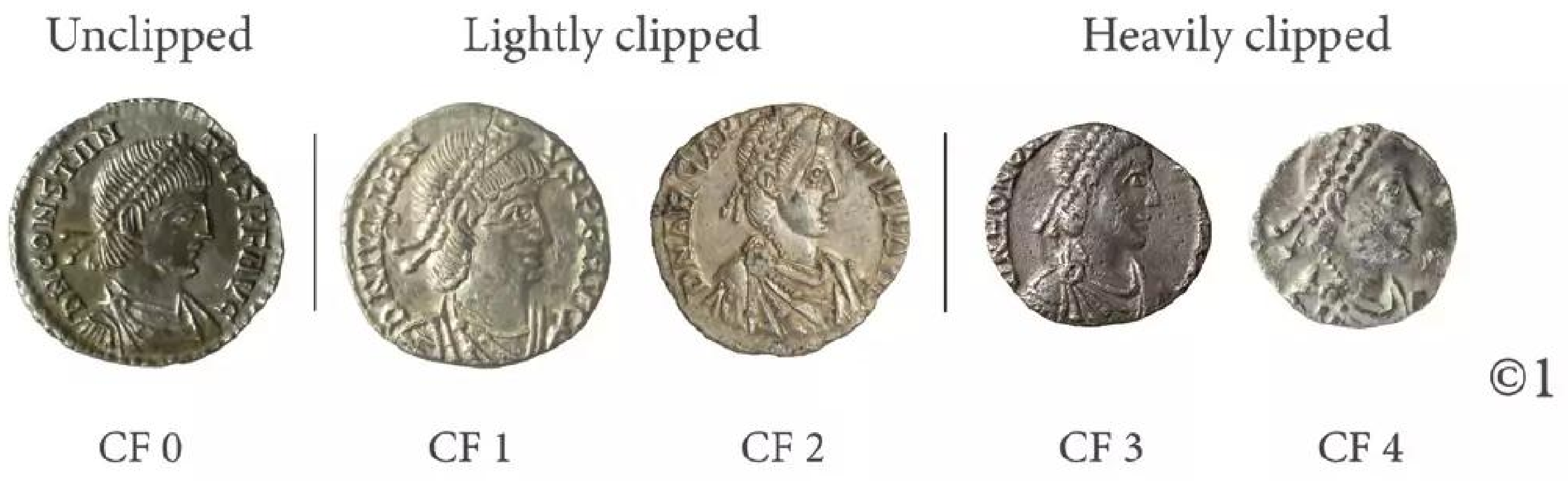
This study has shown that these objects were more than items of personal adornment or currency; they were active expressions of identity, allegiance, and power in a world in transition. By examining the distribution, use, and transformation of these materials, this research shows that the population were not passengers experiencing a seismic change, but instead they were playing an active role in shaping their responses to the end of Roman rule.

Some regions embraced adaptation and continuity, maintaining coin use and status displays well into the fifth century, while others moved more rapidly into new cultural frameworks. These patterns show that the end of Roman Britain was not a single, uniform moment of collapse, but a complex and uneven process of transformation.

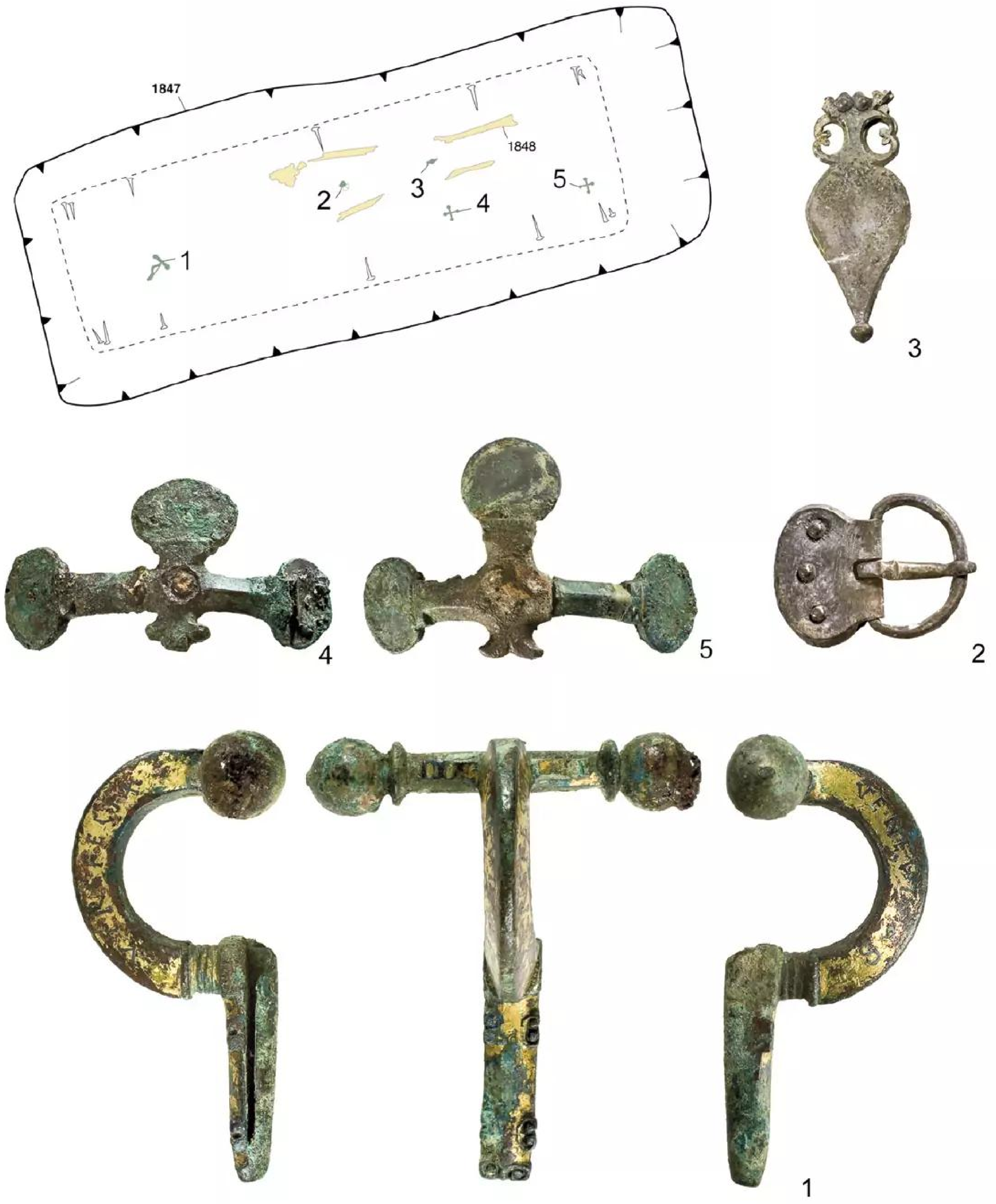
Mapping Roman finds: Visualising changes at the end of Roman Britain

As part of my research into the end of Roman Britain, I have been working with Maploom to create an interactive map that brings together all the datasets

Right: Figure 11 – The clip factor used to define the level of clipping that occurs on coins, note, with CF 3 and CF 4 the imperial portrait is in part cut away

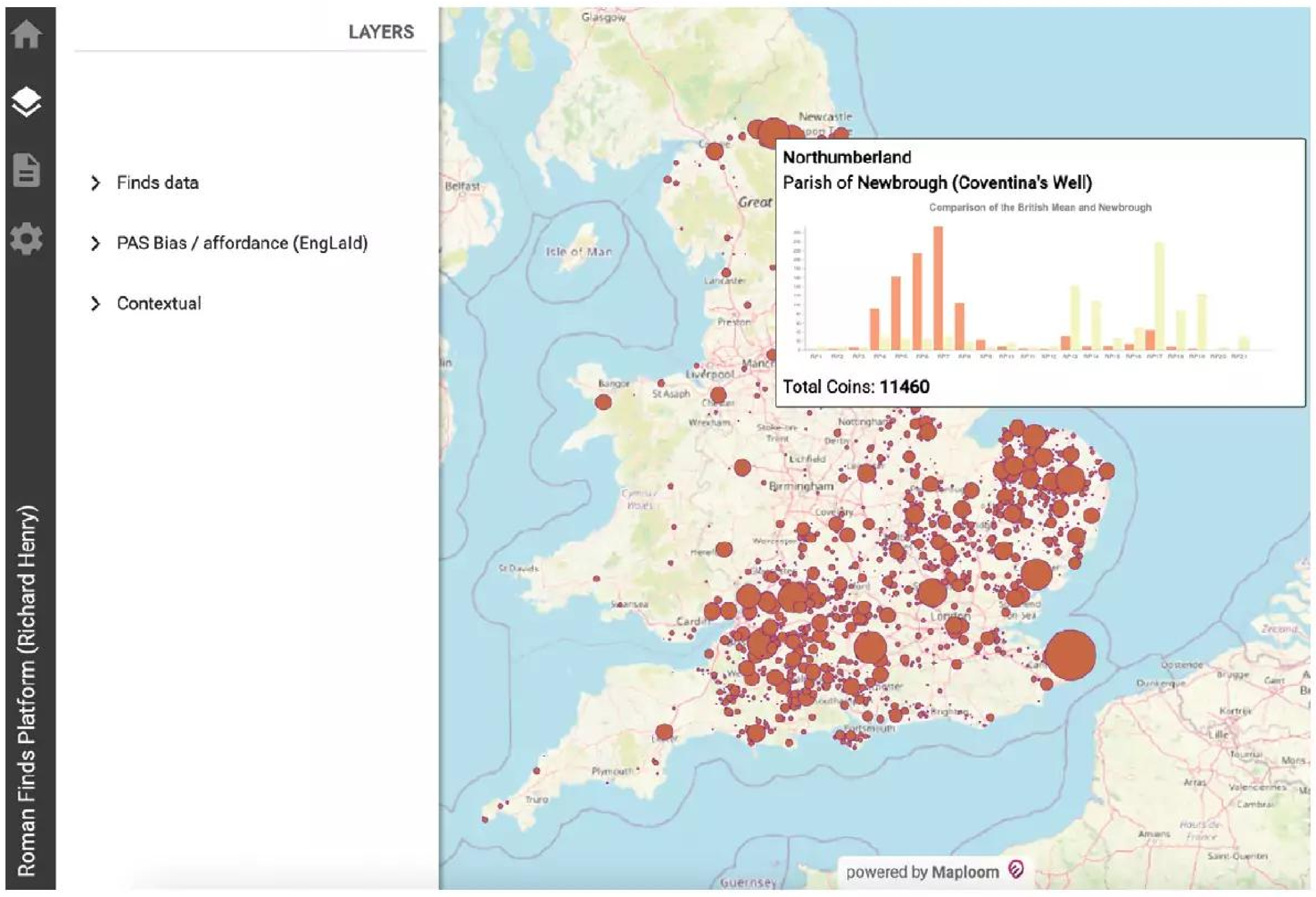


Right: Figure 13 – Grave 1846 from Lankhills cemetery, Winchester, which included spurs, belt fittings, and a crossbow brooch deposited as grave goods



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY THE PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME

Right: Figure 14 – The interactive map developed by Maploom


LAYERS
Finds data
PAS Bias / affordance (EngLaId)
Contextual
Northumberland
Parish of Newbrough (Coventina's Well)
Comparison of the British Mean and Newbrough
Total Coins: 11460
Roman Finds Platform (Richard Henry)
powered by Maploom

MAPLOOM

I used in my study that will become freely available on Archaeological Data Service website (ADS) in due course https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk.

The aim was simple: To create a single, accessible resource where the distributions of coins, hoards, and key objects, such as crossbow brooches, belt fittings, and spurs, could be visualised together, helping to tell the story of the fourth and fifth centuries in a way that maps, tables, and static charts cannot.

Not all of the layers are live at the time this article is published, as some of the datasets are under an embargo and will be added in the months after my book *Fractured Britannia* is published.

As more layers go live, the map will keep growing until it becomes a complete resource showing the distribution of every object type I studied, from penannular brooches to coin hoards. This step-by-step approach means the map can keep developing while still giving researchers, students, and anyone curious about Roman Britain plenty to explore right now.

Layers can be turned on and off, allowing you to compare different types of objects or zoom into specific regions to see what was happening locally. For example, you will be able to explore where clipped siliquae hoards were found and compare that with the distribution of late Roman belt sets, instantly seeing how closely these patterns align in some areas. Or you might contrast the much rarer distribution of spurs with that of crossbow brooches to gain insights into who was using what, and where.

It is not just for academics. Anyone interested in Roman Britain, whether students, local historians, or simply the curious, can use the map to explore material that would otherwise be scattered across specialist publications and databases. You can zoom into your county or parish, see what has been found there, and start to place those finds in the wider story of the end of Roman Britain.

What excites me most is that the map is not static. As new finds are recorded and more data is added, the resource will evolve, providing an even clearer picture of how patterns of continuity, collapse, and transformation varied across Britain. For me, it is about making complex data accessible and meaningful and about bringing to life the evidence for how a single generation navigated one of the most profound periods of change in Britain's history. ■

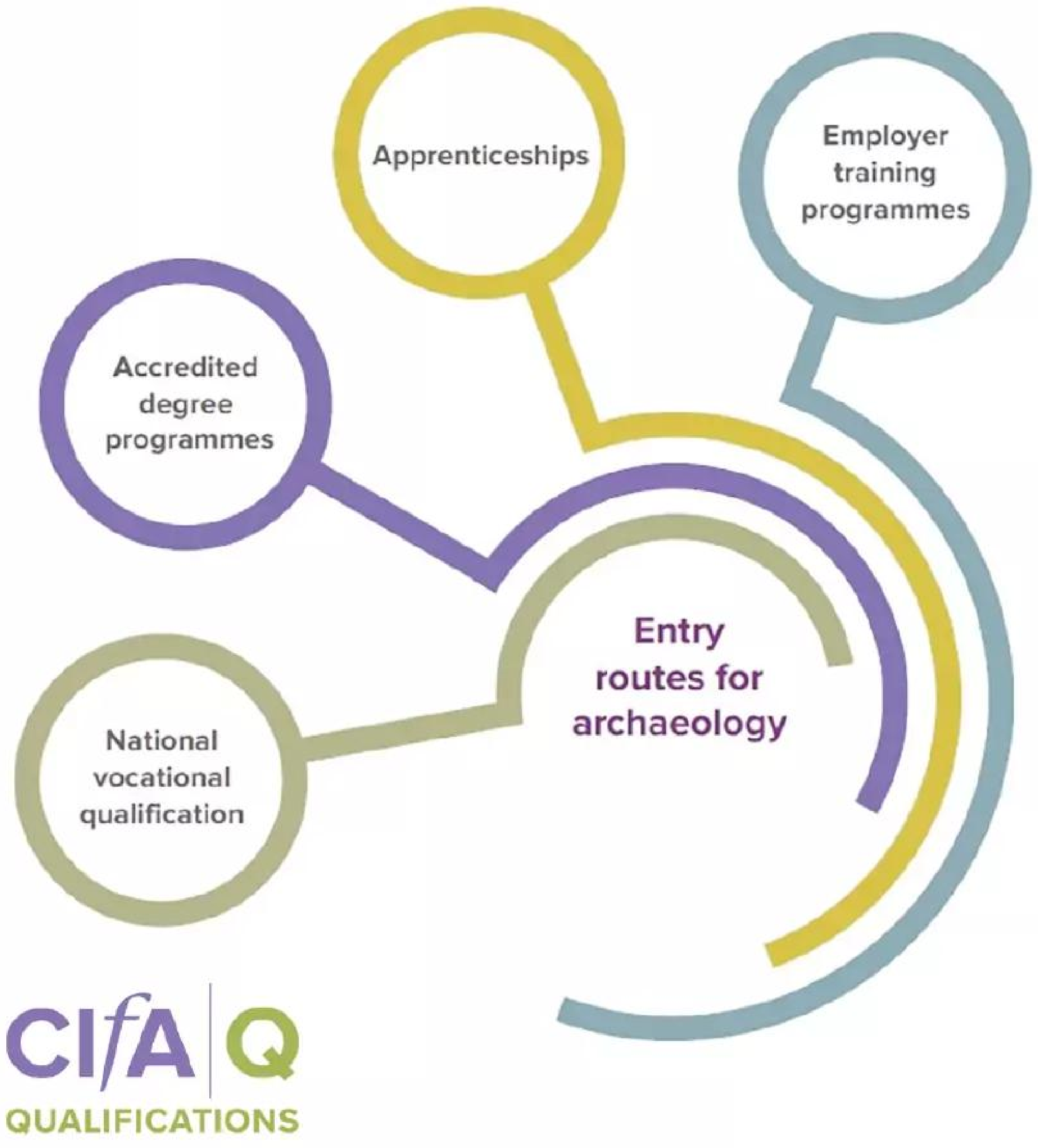
You can explore the interactive map at romanfinds.maploom.com, and the full datasets will be made freely available via the Archaeology Data Service at https://doi.org/10.5284/1090416.

Laying down the foundations:

Career pathways for archaeologists of the future

Archaeology is enjoyed by many in a variety of ways, but what if you wanted to take the next step and develop your passion and skills into a career? In the past, archaeology as a profession was mainly attained through a degree entry-level route. Kate Geary, Cara Jones, Anna Welch, and Amanada Wood highlight the new initiatives that have made entry into the archaeological profession accessible and the different pathways to get there.

How do I get into archaeology? Do I need a degree? Can I train on the job? And how can I demonstrate to future employers I have the skills they need? Knowing where to start to embark on a career in archaeology can be tricky.


Apprenticeships
Employer training programmes
Accredited degree programmes
Entry routes for archaeology
National vocational qualification
CIfA Q
QUALIFICATIONS

Above: Possible entry routes for people looking to start a career in archaeology

The chances are it's not a career choice many careers advisors will be familiar with, and online careers advice often highlights a perceived need for higher-level academic qualifications, a scarcity of job roles, and the need for volunteering to gain practical experience. Despite this, archaeology continues to attract graduates, school-leavers, and career changers who are drawn by the opportunity to combine hands-on, practical skills with research and analysis, to tell stories about our shared human past. And the sector needs them. Demand for archaeological skills remains high as investigation in advance of development and major infrastructure projects continues to drive knowledge and understanding of the past and what it means for us in the present.

Archaeology is a diverse discipline, involving a multitude of skills, from high-level theory to practical problem solving, project management to storytelling, applied science to creative reconstruction. To bring the voices of the past to life in ways that resonate and have meaning for people, we need a diverse workforce drawing on different lived experiences. That means we need to think differently about routes into and through a career in archaeology. Finding ways to attract and develop the archaeologists of the future has been a strategic goal for many organisations across the discipline of archaeology and none more so than the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). It is also an area where partnership working across national agencies, third sector bodies and charities, training providers and universities, and commercial archaeological companies is creating a wealth of new opportunities.

About CIfA

The CIfA is the leading professional body for archaeologists in the UK and overseas. As the professional home for archaeologists, we provide a forum for sharing knowledge and learning, and for developing skills.

CIfA sets high standards in archaeology, benchmarking good practice to support archaeologists to deliver value for society. Our members, whether paid or voluntary, have demonstrated their knowledge and skills against a competence framework, and committed to uphold a code of ethical behaviour in their work. They are professionally accredited – the equivalent of 'chartered' status in other professions. We are also an Ofqual-regulated awarding organisation and a Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) approved assessment centre, operating as CIfA Qualifications.

NYMPHIS SACRVM VICANI VINDOLANDENSES

***Right:* Archaeology technician apprentices on a field trip to Vindolanda**

CIRENCESTER COLLEGE

***Right:* NTS NVQ candidate Alice Connelly**

DEREK ALEXANDER

Skills strategy and approach to professional pathways

We work with a range of partner organisations at both a strategic and delivery level to strengthen and diversify entry routes into archaeology. This article outlines the work we do to support regulated qualifications – apprenticeships, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), and accredited degree programmes – and structured training programmes delivered by employers.

We explicitly link the skills gained on these programmes with the competence and commitment requirements for CIfA membership, providing clear pathways to professional status for those seeking a career in archaeology, or looking to develop their skills.

Apprenticeships

Following development by a consortium of employers, training providers and professional bodies, led by Historic England, heritage apprenticeships in England have really taken off in the last few years. There are now six apprenticeship qualifications approved by the government, covering both archaeology and conservation.

They are designed around a set of competence standards, which means that anyone holding a heritage apprenticeship qualification has demonstrated their expertise, proving through rigorous assessment that they can do the job to industry standards. The job roles that the standards cover are:

- Archaeological Technician level 3
- Historic Environment Advice Assistant level 4
- Cultural Heritage Conservation Technician level 4
- Cultural Heritage Conservator level 7
- Archaeological Specialist level 7
- Historic Environment Advisor level 7.

Any employer can take on an apprentice, if they provide the right work environment to support an apprentice's learning and development. Typically, colleges or universities deliver the formal training, but the majority of learning takes place on the job, and utilises the huge potential that most workplaces have as places to learn and grow.

Employers take on apprentices for many reasons: Recruiting for an apprentice can often attract high-calibre candidates who don't want to pursue the university option, giving employers greater choice in the pool of talent. Apprentices can also bring a fresh and enthusiastic approach to the work. They are also funded with formal training and assessment, being paid for through the apprenticeship levy.

There are more subtle benefits too. By taking on apprentices, employers are demonstrating their commitment to recognised training and they're sending a message to their existing workforce – that they care about recruiting and developing the next generation of archaeologists, and also widening access for people to enter this hugely popular profession.

Apprenticeships are now proven routes into the industry, supporting individuals and businesses to grow. They offer employers and prospective employees a viable and valuable option in widening access into the sector, and they promote real jobs and high-quality qualifications.

Albion Archaeology, a Bedfordshire company of around 50 staff providing independent advice and archaeological services to clients, took on one of the first Level 3 Archaeological Technician apprentices in 2022, and has since gone on to recruit more apprentice trainees.

Kathy Pilkington is a manager at Albion Archaeology and found the experience to be a very positive one. She says: "Taking on an apprentice had a positive effect on our whole organisation. It provided an opportunity to review and improve the training we had in place at all levels. All staff were really pleased to have the chance to pass on their hard-earned knowledge, the field staff in particular took him under their collective wing."

"We were all absolutely thrilled when he passed his apprenticeship with distinction and decided to stay on with us permanently – so at the end of the experience we gained a very effective member of the team. Seeing one's role through the eyes of someone so fresh to the profession also reminded us, that what we do is pretty great."

Chris Patterson, the first apprentice in the country to complete the Level 3 Archaeological Technician qualification in February 2023, was a career changer, having previously trained and worked as a teacher. Like all apprentices, he was required to spend 80% of his time working, and 20% in off-the-job training. For Chris, this balance supported his transition into archaeological work. He says: "I really enjoyed the weekly college sessions where I learnt more about the history of England, and archaeological theory and artefact identification. Apprenticeships are good for the heritage sector as it allows more opportunities for people from all backgrounds to join."

"I worked in education for 10 years, first as a teacher and then within the SEN department of a local authority council before wanting to investigate doing something completely different. While my background was in English (as teacher and my degree) I've always been interested in history but didn't think it was something I could break into after taking a different route in my career and education. The apprenticeship gave me that way into this career."

The programme runs for 12 to 18 months, at which point Chris moved into his end-point assessment. This included a professional discussion, supported by a portfolio of work, an on-site observation, and an online test. For Chris, and other L3 Archaeological Technicians, the focus on on-site observation cemented some of the key behaviours for long-term success in archaeological work.

Chris adds:"I think the major benefit for my employer is being able to train me in the way they specifically want me to be trained, rather than coming to them with other experiences. I was also lucky enough to work with other archaeological companies to see their best practices so that helped with my training as well… I'd also say that employers should consider apprenticeships as a way to develop motivated and skilled workers."

Right: Archaeological technician apprentices on a field trip to Birdoswald Roman fort

CIRENCESTER COLLEGE

Right: Apprentice Tabitha Lawrence

CHLOE HILL

Chris passed his apprenticeship with distinction and went on to gain practitioner-grade membership with CIfA as the first stage in his professional career. He has since moved into archaeological outreach, bringing his education skills into his new career.

Tabitha Gulliver Lawrence is currently undertaking a Level 7 Archaeological Specialist apprenticeship with Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT). As an existing senior site assistant, she and CAT are using the apprenticeship as an opportunity to develop her skills as a flint specialist, addressing a widely recognised shortage in specialist skills and a lack of opportunities to train as a specialist.

Tabitha says: "I have really enjoyed the course so far. It has given me the opportunity to learn lots of different skills – and, more importantly, to practise them. I have been able to develop a specialism in lithics under the guidance of my manager and company director."

The Level 7 apprenticeship is a Master's level programme and Tabitha and her fellow apprentices will graduate with a Master's degree in Archaeological Practice, as well as an apprenticeship qualification. Because the apprenticeship qualification assesses workplace knowledge, skills, and behaviours, successful completion will quality Tabitha for Member level accreditation, the equivalent of a chartered specialist. As well as supporting career-changers and upskillers, apprenticeships work well for those who can't, or don't want to, go to university.

Josie Parry graduated from the Level 4 Historic Environment Advice Assistant apprenticeship in 2023, after working with Historic England as a listing assistant. She was one of a number of apprentices in her cohort to join without a degree, and found the teaching styles of an apprenticeship to be more accessible than other educational pathways. Josie highlights the skills that drew her to an apprenticeship: "I think

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MATEVZ GROSELJ

Clockwise from above left: University of Central Lancashire Archaeology students at a training gig; Albion apprentice, Chris Patterson; apprentice and NVQ assessor and director of Air Photo Services Chris Cox; HE apprentice Josie Parry; Lincolnshire County Council apprentice Tim Snell

the ability to research and think critically about buildings were the first skills I developed. The principles of selection and how you view buildings in that sense, and how to use policy in a practical sense to produce a single argument."

Listing assistants focus on producing specialist advice and recommendations on whether to include a historic building, archaeological site, or designed landscape on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE). Through a heritage-focused apprenticeship standard, Josie was able to develop the specialist knowledge, skills, and behaviours, and to "start working and getting practical experience without the debt of university". As well as a range of specialist skills, Josie also highlighted the 'soft' skills she gained in the workplace

"You're actually emailing people. You're going to team meetings. You learn professional etiquette. I think learning how to talk to senior members of staff and workplace dynamics, that was really useful for me... Working in a big organisation like Historic England, because there's so many different departments, we ended up like having so much communication with other people. For example, we talked to the communications team about the press releases [for the Pie and Mash shop project]. So, you get to communicate with loads of different departments on projects which is a really useful way to understand how organisations function and as well as making connections."

Following her successful assessment, Josie went on to work for Historic England, initially in the Historic Environment Records Office before moving to the London and South East regional listing team, managing listing casework. "In this role, I aid in the listing process considering applications for new listings, amendments to existing List entries and de-list requests, as well as advising on customer enquiries concerning listing. I research such a range of buildings and archaeology in the role which makes it incredibly engaging and exciting – no two days in the office are the same."

Apprenticeships help to create this space in the sector for those coming in through alternative routes. Josie emphasises the keenness and passion that apprentices have, amplified through their 'bespoke training', that puts them on the path for a heritage career.

Tim Snell is another former apprentice who was looking for a vocational way into a professional career. Tim started off volunteering with the Historic Places Team at Lincolnshire County Council where Ian George, historic places manager, wanted to create an opportunity for him to benefit from recognised education and skills development. Ian says: "When the level 4 Historic Environment Advice Assistant apprenticeship was launched, we were keen to get him enrolled. The council is very supportive of apprenticeships across the board and we pay the levy, so we wanted some return for that investment."

Tim's role as an historic places technical assistant is to manage data that's generated through the planning process; this fitted well with the level 4 Historic Environment Advice Assistant standard. As well as upskilling his technical abilities, the course also provided other benefits. Ian adds: "There was a definite advantage to him doing the apprenticeship; it wasn't just the obvious skills of knowledge and understanding, it was also the soft, more hidden skills. Tim particularly benefitted from networking and speaking to other heritage professionals; it gave him a new network of people to learn from and, as a result, there was a really marked growth in his confidence. The apprenticeship brought a lot of value to him in his role and also as an individual."

It is worth noting that employers do have to put time into an apprenticeship programme for it to be really successful. It's important to support apprentices through effective mentoring to help them meet the high standards of the qualification. Ian explains: "The upskilling in the workplace took a bit of managing but he got through it, and he did a great job. I would caution people to be aware of the management requirement and the time commitment that goes along with it, but I wouldn't let that put people off. I would definitely recommend that people take on apprentices. The value that we've seen from the investment in our apprentices is definitely worth the personnel and financial investment from our side. It's a worthwhile investment."

Why become an assessor?

All apprentices go through a rigorous process of assessment at the end of their apprenticeships. Assessors must be

***Right:* NVQ candidate Monty Oakley (on the right) cataloguing finds**

***Above:* Students on an accredited degree at the University of Central Lancashire**

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independent of the organisations hosting the apprentice and the training providers providing the formal learning content, and are often senior professionals and experts in their fields. But what makes someone want to become an assessor? And what do they get out of it? We asked one of our experienced assessors, Chris Cox, director of Air Photo Services, what attracted her to the role.

"It's actually sharing the enthusiasm of people in their early careers, at the apprenticeship stage, and being able to see how people, through these apprenticeships, have been able to develop their skills, and their confidence," explains Chris. "I'm seeing a very developed support infrastructure for these apprentices; it's very well thought out. Apprentices contribute an awful lot to the companies they work in – a lot of their own time and effort, and considerable developed abilities. They are a pair of hands which are becoming more and more informed as they go along. They also contribute a different way of thinking; you have somebody who is very keen to learn and they're fully invested in their job."

She adds: "I think the value for employers is that they have a professional partner delivering some of the learning and training. It's a partnership; and you can get the kind of employee that you want by shaping an apprenticeship to what your company can offer. And they also have somebody who is very keen to learn, and is fully invested in their job. They've not come to you just to earn a salary; they've come to develop a skill."

Chris has been an assessor for apprenticeships and NVQs for several years now and, in that time, has seen a wide variety of apprentices and trainees achieve their qualification. Each apprenticeship is different as they carry out a distinct role, and complete a unique project. When asked about the rewards of being an assessor, Chris says: "It's actually great to give something back to the profession. We have to think about what each apprentice has done and how we will go about questioning them, and discussing things, to bring out their best. These apprenticeships are open to everybody, to career changers, to people of different ages, people with different family demographics."

She adds: "I like being a little part of that now – actually giving people in this wonderful structure a hand up. To be part of that is actually a lovely thing."

So far, apprenticeships are only available in England, but work is well underway to develop a Scottish Modern Apprenticeship to increase opportunities north of the border. This is a key element of Scotland's Archaeology Strategy which has a section devoted to skills and innovation. The work is supported by Historic Environment Scotland and is being delivered by CIfA in partnership with a technical expertise group consisting of archaeology employers.

NVQ Level 3 Certificate in Archaeological Practice

As well as apprenticeships, NVQs offer another flexible route into a career in archaeology. They can also be used to upskill graduates or existing staff in key areas, particularly around practical skills, or to formally recognise the skills developed over years of volunteer work.

NVQs are nationally recognised qualifications that are all about competence and practical skills; qualifying with this NVQ demonstrates that someone has the skills and understanding to carry out complex archaeological activity. Unlike traditional, academic qualifications, they are typically delivered in the workplace and candidates are assessed carrying out workplace tasks.

For example, in one of the units of the Archaeological Practice NVQ, candidates are assessed on how well they contribute to intrusive investigations. This means that an assessor will observe them preparing for, and undertaking, intrusive operations and preparing records and schedules. They will also ask the candidate questions about their underpinning knowledge on implementing intrusive investigations so that they can decide if they are competent in this area. This combination of observation and questioning means that the candidate can actually demonstrate that they can carry out that job, to the right standard.

Anybody can register for an NVQ, provided that they have access to the relevant opportunities to develop and demonstrate their skills, whether that's through work or through community archaeology projects. There are no entry qualifications and there are few time restraints on completing the qualification; and that flexibility can make them very attractive. Like the apprenticeship criteria, NVQ standards have also been developed by employers so they are really focused on skills needed in the workplace. NVQs are used by employers who want a flexible qualification that puts the business first; they can also be instrumental in supporting systematic training as NVQ standards are great for identifying skills gaps. Like apprenticeships, they are regulated qualifications and carry the Ofqual stamp of approval, and like apprenticeships, they are rigorously assessed.

Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service were an early adopter of the NVQ to structure entry-level training programmes designed to bridge the gap between academic qualifications and the skills needed in the workplace. They have been joined by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) who worked with CIfA to develop a graduate trainee role linked to the NVQ.

Dr Daniel Rhodes, NTS senior archaeologist, says: "We wanted to create the traineeship because archaeology is key to the conservation mission of not only the National Trust for Scotland but a changing land management sector more widely. Although universities sometimes teach landscape-scale approaches to archaeology, they rarely link this to conservation practice or public engagement. We feel that, as Scotland's largest conservation charity, we can help early-career archaeologists transition into the conservation sector through experiencing how their core archaeological skills can be applied to integrated landscape management, onsite interpretation and public outreach."

Alice Connelly joined the NTS Archaeology team earlier this year. Alice notes: "I was drawn to this role as I'd been on a slightly convoluted path towards a career in archaeology, completing an MA in archaeology at Edinburgh University, then spending 300 days fast-packing the coast of Britain, followed by a season of guiding at Edinburgh Castle. Working with the Trust and doing the NVQ with CIfA is giving me a sense of direction and the chance to get stuck into loads of different aspects of archaeology. It's been a great way to figure out what I enjoy and think about where I want to go next. By the end of my traineeship, I'll be in a strong position to champion archaeological conservation and carry the Trust's values of conservation, engagement and sustainability into whatever comes next in my career."

The flexibility of the NVQ appeals to a wide range of learners. Monty Oakley was already a highly experienced volunteer when he approached the CIfA Qualifications assessment centre to see if the NVQ would be suitable for him. His assessor worked with him to help translate the 'educational-ese' language of learning outcomes and performance criteria, but he was able to draw on a wealth of knowledge and skills gained from many years volunteering across commercial and community projects to easily demonstrate his competence against the criteria.

Monty wasn't looking for a career in archaeology but rather to cement and demonstrate his extensive skills through a recognised qualification, which has also enabled him to gain practitioner accreditation with CIfA.

Accredited degrees

In 2018, CIfA and UAUK (University Archaeology UK) began exploring the potential to offer Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation for degrees in archaeology and applied subjects. The aim was to recognise degree programmes teaching the practical and professional skills that would help graduates seeking to work in the sector. The process was launched a year later, administered by CIfA staff, but overseen by a UAUK steering group, and a CIfA committee.

The process is designed to assess practical skills, rather than academic knowledge or teaching, so applicants are asked to map degree module learning outcomes to National Occupational Standards (NOS) – nationally recognised statements of competence, which underpin vocational qualifications. Graduates should understand how to apply the skills they have learned when they enter the workplace.

The teaching of ethical working practices and the importance of Continuing Professional Development and career planning has equal weight alongside an appreciation of the importance of health and safety, and risk assessment. Accreditation lasts for five years and is rigorously assessed by a panel comprising representatives from industry and academia. The process is also designed to be a collaborative opportunity to share knowledge and good practice between institutions. Archaeology departments delivering accredited degree programmes are offered student talks and lectures on professional practice, while students can take advantage of free student membership of CIfA, allowing them access to events, training, and resources on the CIfA website.

The scheme brings together representatives from academia and industry, and the resulting dialogue has been valuable for both applying departments and accreditation panellists. It has allowed CIfA to communicate directly with students and staff and is a platform for cross sector discussion about skills needs and challenges.

Not all archaeology students will choose to work in archaeology – it is after all a degree acknowledged to give excellent transferrable skills that non-sector employers value highly – but for those that do, accredited degree programmes lay solid foundations for a career in archaeology. Archaeology is an incredibly varied discipline and can be an enormously rewarding career choice for people of all ages, from all sorts of backgrounds, and with all sorts of skill sets.

This article has been co-authored by: Kate Geary, Co-CEO (Learning, Skills and Influence); Cara Jones, Head of Skills and Development; Anna Welch, Professional Development Coordinator; Amanda Wood, CIfA Qualifications Assessment Centre Manager

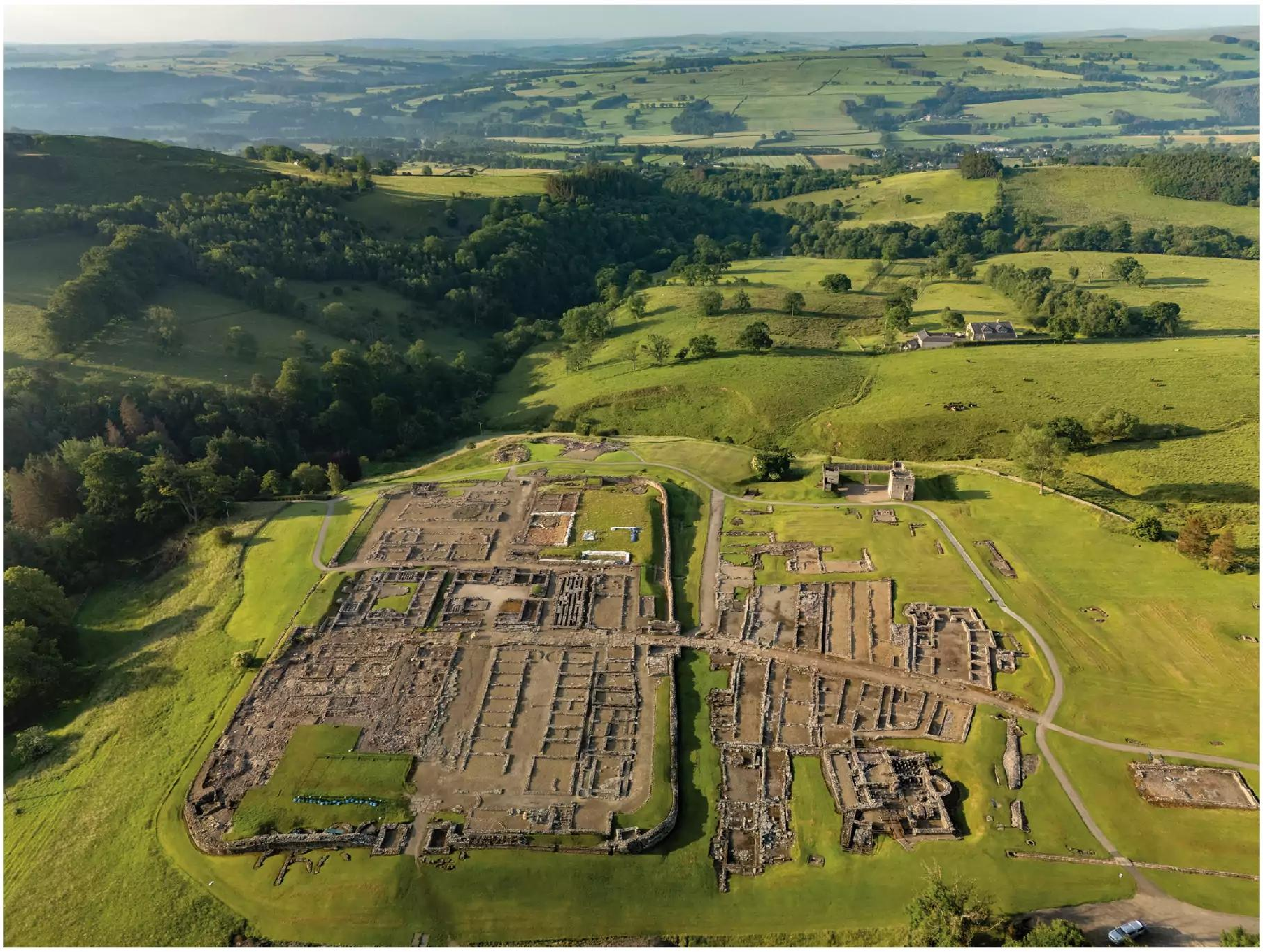
Useful links

You can find out more about what it's like to work as an archaeologist and how to get started on the CIfA website at www.archaeology.net/careers/kit and from the following links:

- Apprenticeship opportunities in England are advertised online: www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship.
- The Level 3 Archaeological Technician apprenticeship is offered by Cirencester College with most of the teaching delivered online. Find out more at Archaeology – Cirencester College: www.cirencester.ac.uk/a/apprenticeships-standards/archaeology-2/
- The Level 4 Historic Environment Advice Assistant apprenticeship is offered by Strode College, also mostly delivered online: https://www.strode-college.ac.uk/courses/our-courses/historic-environment-advice-assi/
- For more information about the Level 3 NVQ Certificate in Archaeological Practice, please contact assessment@archaeologists.net
- Details of degree programmes accredited by CIfA can be found on our website; search for Accredited Degrees CIfA: www.archaeologists.net/careers/kit/skills/degrees

Their grandparents and father were central figures, but siblings Andrew Birley and Sonya Galloway took different paths to the Trust at the edge of Roman Britain

The Vindolanda Trust



ALL IMAGES VINDOLANDA TRUST

Above: An aerial view of Vindolanda taken in 2025 by Matthew Stafford

Andrew Birley
CEO and director of excavations

Our family were part of the founding members of the Vindolanda Trust in 1970, and the Trust got the keys to the museum four years later, on the day I was born.

Our father was an archaeologist, our mother was a curator, our uncle was a professor of ancient history, and every dinner table conversation touched on archaeology or ancient history. For those family members who weren't involved, like my sister Sonya, it must have been soul-destroyingly tedious. However, I loved it and soaked it up like a sponge.

For most of my early years, I was parked in my pushchair, either in the lab or on the edge of excavations. In time I'd earn a bit of pocket money by washing finds, but I wasn't allowed to join in with digging until I was 15.

My father, Robin Birley, was working in an area of anaerobic excavations and wherever you walked, looked, knelt, there was something there, whether it be an animal bone, a piece of pottery, or a timber building. The deposits were not only incredibly deep but also gave off a noxious gas.

Far right: Robin Birley on site in 1997, and Right: Robin in 1970

At first, I could only manage a couple of hours, but I was able to work comfortably in that environment within a few years and I've never been affected since. I remember finding my first full Roman shoe preserved in the anaerobic mud, the leather in fantastic condition. It was a marching boot which had been flattened and, turning it over, all the studs were lined up on the underside. I must have found about 2,500 more since then but finding them never gets old.

I went on to study archaeology at Leicester University and, after a course in lithics put me off flint for life, I knew I was destined to follow in my family's well-worn footsteps and become a Roman specialist.

Before returning to Hadrian's Wall, I was encouraged to undertake an excavation elsewhere and spent three months working on a Tel site in Israel that changed my life. For the first time, I really got to understand the value of archaeology to people's sense of who they are and the power of politics in shaping our narratives of the past.

It made me question what we do and why we do it, and reinforced for me that there should be strong values underpinning our profession.

I'm often reminded of this in our work at the Vindolanda Trust. The site is situated at the edge of the Roman Empire, on a border that became politically active again with the debate around Scottish independence. Despite never forming a border between England and Scotland, Hadrian's Wall was used as a political tool by both sides of the argument.

As archaeologists, we take the long view and can see that these borders are constructs that only last a certain amount of time. Our societies are constantly in flux and what truly unites people is our long history of shared human experience.

The work I'm most proud of has been the opportunity to tell the stories of those who time has forgotten. We used to think of the Roman army as a fully male military construct on the basis that soldiers weren't allowed to marry until they completed their 25-year service, and yet the archaeology of our frontier settlements at Vindolanda and Magna paints an entirely different picture.

Roman forts stand very prominently in the landscape but what has been often overlooked are the accompanying extramural settlements, typically two or three times the size of the forts. When we started to map out the material culture across the full area of the sites we found there was no significant difference between what is found within the forts and the adjacent towns. There seemed to have been as many soldiers living in the town as the fort, and as many women and children living in the fort as the town.

Left: Andrew Birley (standing on the right), excavating at Vindolanda in 1997

Far left: Andrew on site, and left: Washing down the dedication slab

There were concentrations indicating areas of different activity, but it was effectively one large settlement used by one inter-connected group of people, including non-combatants. In fact, we think about 40% of the 5,000 shoes and boots recovered from Vindolanda would have belonged to women or children.

It's thanks to the remarkable preservation of organic materials in the anaerobic conditions that we have been able to shed light on the women and children who lived within these settlements, whether it's a wooden toy sword found in the living quarters of the cavalry barracks, or a wooden writing tablet recording a birthday invitation from the wife of a commanding officer to her friend.

What's alarmed me most in recent years is the impact of climate change on the preservation of archaeology as we're starting to lose these invaluable organic materials, without which we wouldn't have been able to come to some of the conclusions we have. Some of those missing people would have remained lost forever.

Since I started working at Vindolanda, two of the six timber forts built on top of each other have decomposed. They've gone in half my lifetime. We have over 900 textiles from Vindolanda, found between the 1970s and early 2000s, but they're now all gone. We might still find more robust shoe soles, but we no longer find the more delicate footwear uppers from anything but the deepest deposits, and the number of surviving writing tablets is rapidly diminishing.

The Vindolanda Trust has invested in weather stations and accompanying underground probes across both our sites to better understand the relationship between climatic conditions and the preservation of

Top: Sonya Galloway at Vindolanda

Above right: Sonya with her family

Above: A lance and spear head discovered on site

the remaining buried archaeology. In the first few years of monitoring soil conditions, we're finding increased volumes of oxygen deeper in the ground, which is helping bacteria to break the organic remains down, and we are likely to lose more of the remaining timber forts in the next decade or two.

We've redesigned our exhibition room on the way into the site to show live data streams from the probes and explain what they mean.

The Vindolanda Trust is funded entirely by our visitors, including all the research, the excavations, the conservation, the consolidation, the labs, and the museums, so we owe it to them to get the message out about the threat we're facing.

I feel we're embracing the challenge and thinking positively. Archaeology is a renewable resource, as we can ask different questions, use different techniques, and find different meanings in the past every single day.

I became director of excavations in 2005, taking over the reins from my dad. I then became the CEO of the Vindolanda Trust 10 years later, so that was a big jump. I've learned you must step out of the shadows to forge your own path. We're still a family unit – my wife is the curator and conservator for the museum, and my sister manages communications for the Trust.

In 2028, we plan to finish the excavation of the last stone fort at Vindolanda. By that time, over 11,000 people will have taken part over nearly 60 years, which is just staggering. That's more than two legions of people who've excavated a cohort's fort.

We want to try and encourage as many people as we can to come along and take part in our celebrations and for them to share their memories.

Sonya Galloway

Communications manager, The Vindolanda Trust

Archaeology has always permeated my life, just as it has for Andrew, but unlike him, I just found it so boring. There was only one topic of conversation in our household and by the time it came to university, I'd had enough of archaeology.

I went to study human geography because it's always been about people for me. Now though, I realise that what I loved about geography – how people create and interact with their built environment – has so many crossovers with Roman archaeology.

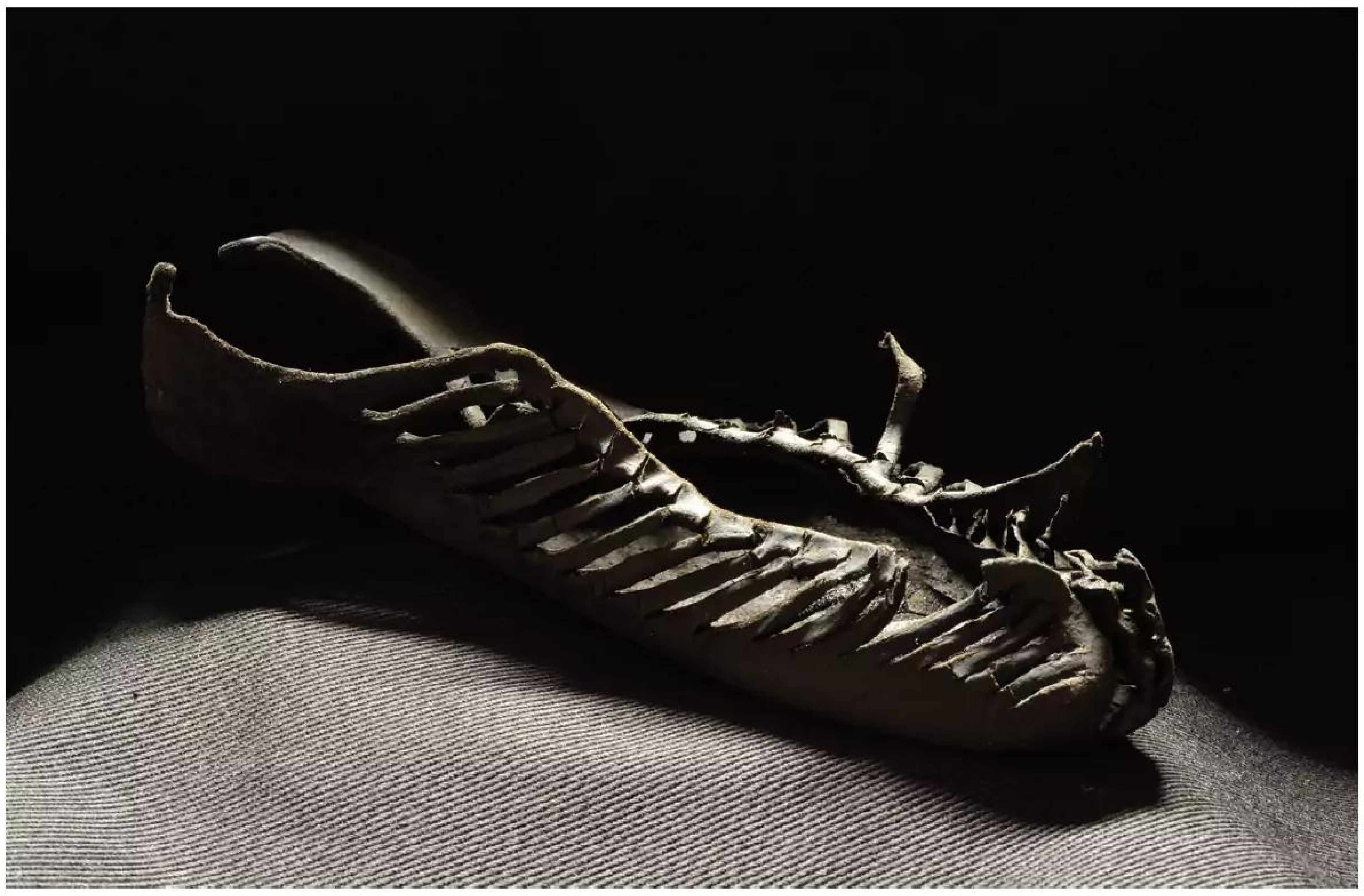
I went on to work as a town planner in Scotland but soon discovered that you can't make plans for the future without understanding where you've come from. I became interested in the historical built heritage of cities and how to preserve and celebrate that in balance with the needs of the future.

However, there was a point, when I was working on a very high-profile planning application, that I spent more time speaking to lawyers than I did with my family. I had two small children, and my father was unwell, so we decided to move back across the border to be near family and I became involved with the Vindolanda Trust professionally.

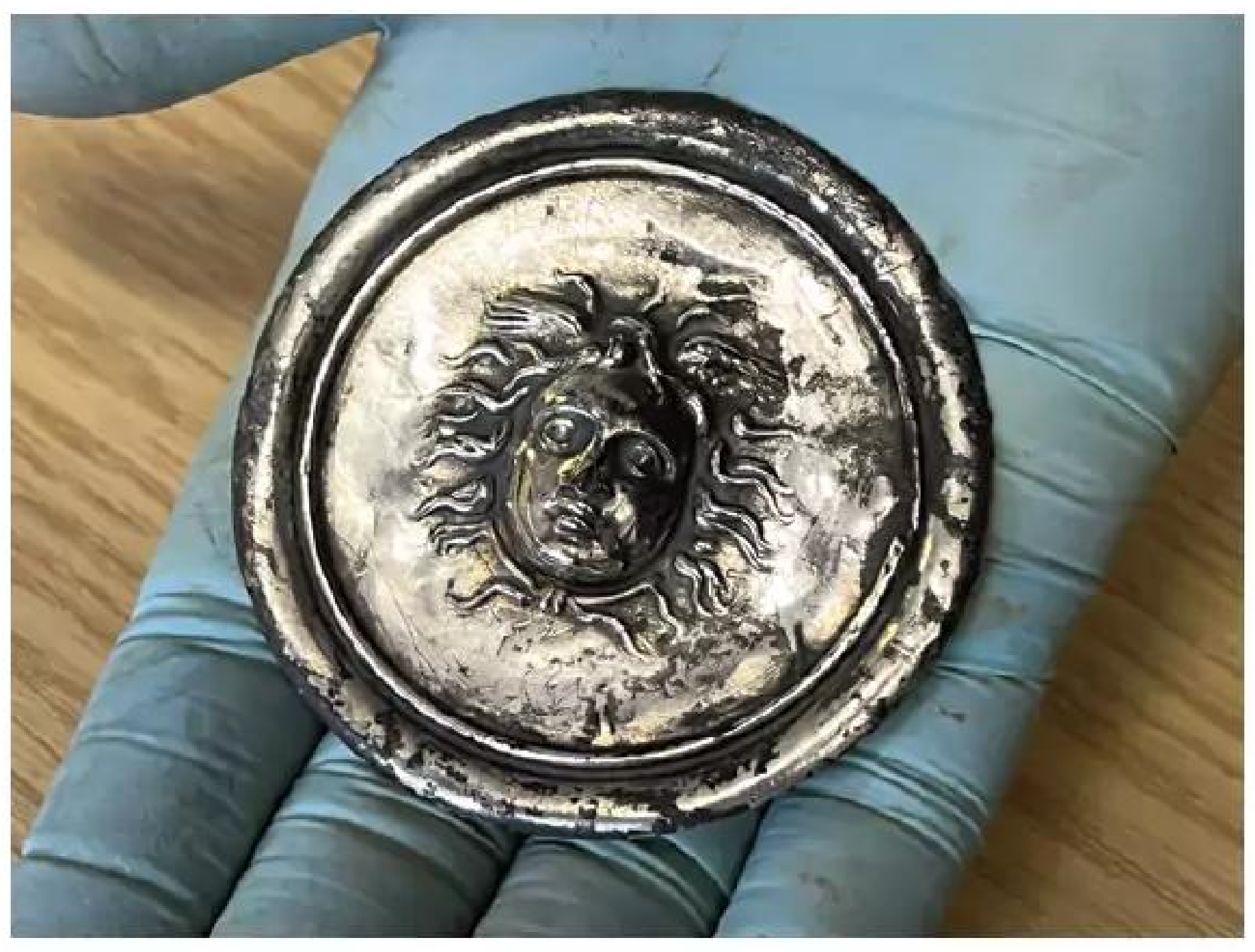
For me, it was never about the archaeology. I never craved to get in a trench with a trowel and get my hands dirty. I saw it as an opportunity to unlock the stories held by the artefacts, find the human connections, and share those with a wider audience. The Trust had been outsourcing PR to a company but I successfully made a case to the board to secure a role managing the communications. I've really embraced it and it's something I still really enjoy doing.

I effectively became the voice of the Vindolanda Trust. People wanted to hear what we were doing and, with some targeted changes, we've grown and grown our platform. When I started 13 years ago, visitors weren't

Above: A wooden spoon just after being discovered



Above right: Child's shoe, Adidas Predator style



Right: Silver phalera with Medusa head

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Right: Reenactment of a temple ceremony at Vindolanda

allowed to take photographs in our museum, but allowing people to share their experiences has opened a conversation, given us insights into what they're engaging with, and helped to spread the word.

I see archaeology through the lens not of an academic archaeologist, but through an interested person, so it's my job to reach out to others in that position as they're the visitors, volunteers, and supporters, the lifeblood who keep our organisation running.

A few years ago, we found 421 shoes in an excavation season, and, in the press release, I said that one of the shoes looked a little bit like an Adidas Predator football boot. Making that comparison helped that shoe transfer from being an archaeology news story to being a sports-related story that got profiled on the back pages of several national red-top newspapers.

Someone wrote to us to say that we shouldn't be dumbing down archaeology, but my response to that is that we're not over-simplifying or trivialising by making these comparisons, we're making it accessible. We're reaching audiences who didn't know that the Romans wore leather boots, or that examples have survived millennia in the ground.

We make no apologies for working out different ways that we can connect with more people to engage and educate people. Maybe because that's how I've felt myself, but you don't have to be interested in Romans to love our sites, because it's ultimately about people.

You have to be adaptable to generate and maintain interest. It used to be more usual that if we found something, we would write a press release and reach out to contacts to get it published in a newspaper or profiled on TV. Although we still do press releases for certain finds, the majority goes on our social media accounts, and then the press come to us.

We also do more videos now, particularly on our YouTube channel. The videos took off during the COVID lockdowns, as we didn't have any TV crews coming and people couldn't travel to us, so we decided to try filming ourselves, and they've proven really popular.

We're always learning, and you can never predict what will take off. When we found a silver phalera, a military badge of honour with the head of Medusa, I was sure it was going to break the internet but, the engagement generated didn't come close to a very shabby fourth century lance head also unearthed that year.

The lancehead had clearly seen some action as it had a couple of nicks in it. The wonderful thing is that I can feed back the reactions of people online back to Barbara, our curator, and she can incorporate them into our exhibitions. I like the surprise element of this job. It would be dull if we thought we'd got it right all the time.

I'd now describe myself as uber-interested, but I've always got an eye on the story that will connect to the masses. I let our archaeologists continue to liaise with other academics because what I'm interested in is how to engage with people who will be inspired to come and visit our sites.

There's a large volume of exciting research coming from our sites, so many stories to tell, and I'm in a really privileged position to be among the first people to see and learn about them. I find it really special to have a moment to get up close and personal when I'm called down to the lab to take a photograph of a new find for press purposes.

I'm drawn to objects that might seem at first mundane or ordinary. One of my favourite finds, which did amazingly on social media, was a wooden spoon, a very simple object and still commonly used today. It was burnt at the end, where someone presumably left it in the pan for too long, and I think we can all relate to the frustrations of the person who did that nearly 2,000 years ago.

We reach another milestone later this decade. In 2029, it will be the 100-year anniversary of our family's relationship with Hadrian's Wall, started by our grandparents, Eric and Peggy Birley. Andrew and I are really proud to be among the custodians in this moment in time.

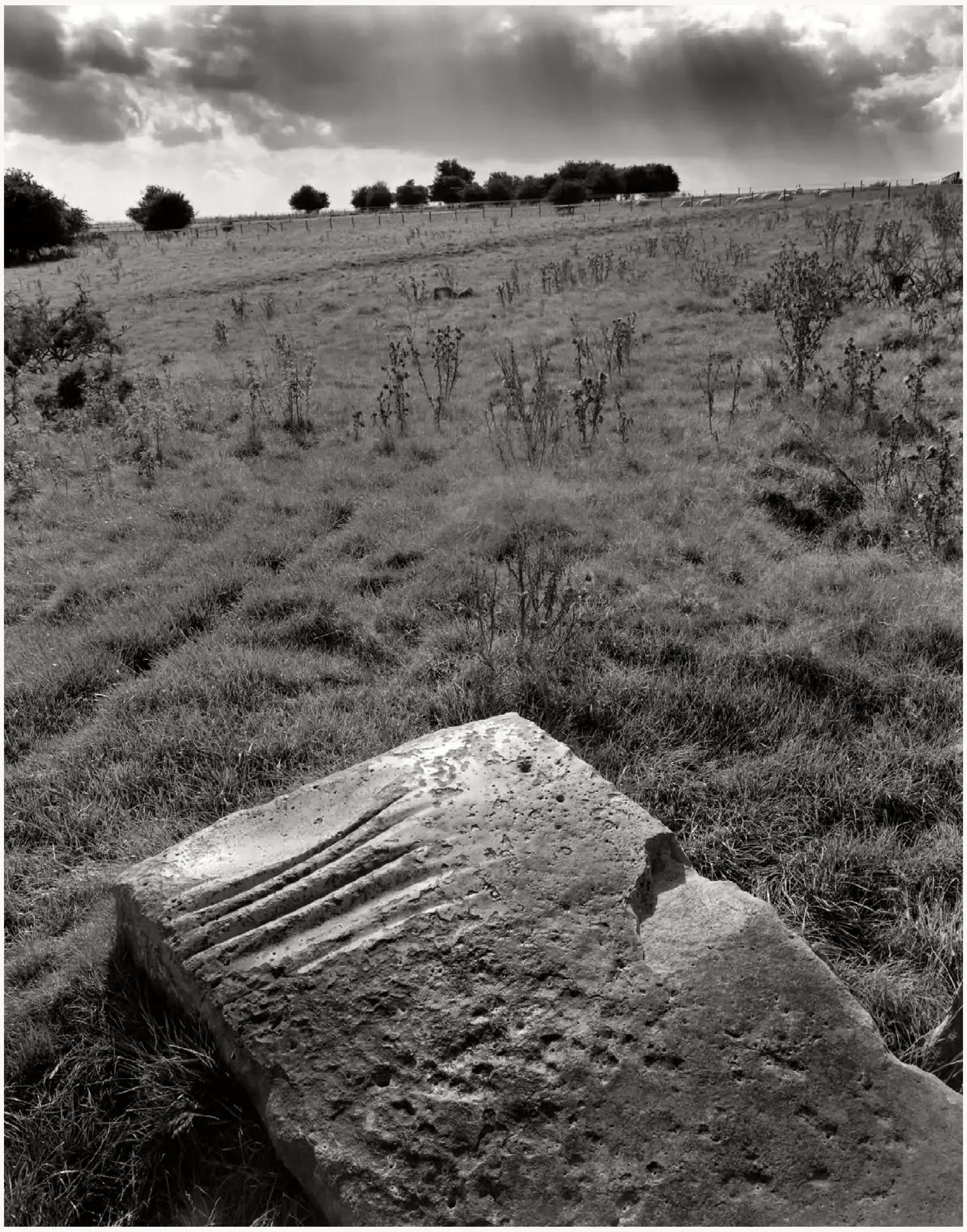
We have a culture where it's not just the Birley family who have had that level of connection and involvement, but people working and volunteering at all levels across the organisation, which is incredibly important to safeguard the Trust and its sites for the future.

We're fortunate to have a staff member who has worked at the Roman Army Museum for over 40 years, and we have volunteers who have returned for consecutive seasons of excavation over decades.

People often cite the ethos of care and belonging as the reason for the longevity of their commitment. You don't have to be part of the bloodline to be part of the family here. ■

Mick Sharp visits the upper Kennet valley in Wiltshire

Overton Down polissoir, Avebury



MICK SHARP

The parishes of Fyfield and West Overton (Overton Down), spread across the upper Kennet valley between Avebury and Marlborough, contain large tracts of high chalk downland bearing traces of human activity from prehistory to the present day.

A plethora of footpaths, bridleways, byways, and tracks, plus national and local trails criss-cross these downs. There are open-access areas and numerous official designations, including the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Beauty, the Marlborough Downs Nature Improvement Area, Fyfield Down National Nature Reserve, and the Avebury UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Chalk subsoil is covered by grass-grown clay-with-flints inhabited by flocks of 'Grey Wethers', the famous sarsen stones used to construct the Avebury stone circles and avenues, and other megalithic monuments across southern England.

These 'Saracen stones' are the remnants of a cap of concreted sand and quartz which formed over the chalk some 30-50 million years ago.

At over 200m above sea level, Bronze Age farmers created land divisions and field systems in which to grow their crops. Although silted up, eroded and overgrown, their linear banks and ditches, embanked enclosures, lynchets and 'Celtic fields' survive. Arable land use continued here into the early first millennium AD, until rough grazing took over.

For 39 years, Peter Fowler and his team lovingly and meticulously studied this area. Their results were handsomely published in 2000 by the Society of Antiquaries of London as *Landscape Plotted and Pieced: Landscape History and Local Archaeology in Fyfield and Overton, Wiltshire*, the title inspired by Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem, *Pied Beauty*.

In 1962, a certain Inigo Jones of Parson's Penning 'discovered' the impressively grooved, smoothed, and dished sarsen slab illustrated above. Excavating around the stone in 1963, Fowler's team discovered a pit which had most likely once held the megalith upright. Having fallen, the slab was used as a workbench for shaping, whetting, and polishing Neolithic stone axes, adzes, and chisels; the grooves to sharpen the edges, the dish to smooth the sides.

Sarsen sandstone is regular and evenly textured, but grainy enough to shape and smooth implements made from harder metamorphic rocks. At least two other similar recumbent polishing stones are known from Overton Down.

The 2.1m stone had been split north-south by medieval stone breakers using iron wedges to remove the western part; indentations in the remaining western edge show where the wedges were driven in. A King John halfpenny (1199-1216), half a horseshoe, and an iron wedge were found beside the stone: The wedge exactly fitted one of the edge notches.

I photographed the polissoir in September 1987 when working with Professor Fowler on our book *Images of Prehistory*, published by Cambridge University Press in 1990. I enjoyed my time in this otherworldly ancient landscape but, despite guidance and help from Peter, and local farmer and archaeologist Gill Swanton (who sadly died in July 2025), I had some trouble navigating the area and photographing the field systems at ground level.

To enhance surface marks on the polishing stone I used clean water, orange and polarising filters, and looked SSW against the light. ■

The polissoir is on open access land at SU 12837150.

Walk 2.4km east from the Avebury circle on the Anglo-Saxon Herepath, head north for 700m on the Ridgeway, then 200m east after a footpath on the right and the end of the Gallups racehorse training course.

Map essential.

Viking North is open at the Yorkshire Museum until 2027.

For more information and for prices, visit www.yorkshiremuseum.org.uk/

Viking North
at the Yorkshire Museum

Reviewed by Rachel Bishop

Viking North is the major new exhibition at the Yorkshire Museum in York exploring the impact of Viking invasion and settlement across the North of England through fascinating artefacts and engaging displays.

The exhibition begins with the invasion of the Great Viking Army in 865. A stunning display of Viking-age weaponry includes swords, axe-heads, and one of the museum's star objects, the York Helmet. Exciting discoveries from the Great Viking Army's camp at Aldwark in North Yorkshire, such as hack silver, pieces of metal-working, and gaming pieces, offer a glimpse into life in an army on the move. An audio soundscape of crashing waves and whistling wind immerses visitors into the seafaring journeys of the Vikings, and an interactive display allows you to experience a 'Raven's Eye' view of the Great Army's camp through a digital installation created by the University of York.

VIKING
NORTH

Viking North presents key artefacts from across the North to explore Viking Yorkshire's links with the wider world and the evolution of Anglo-Scandinavian identity. Star finds, such as the Bedale Hoard, and the famous silk cap from Coppergate, highlight international trade, while cultural exchange within the Danelaw is reflected in fabulous stone carvings. A grave slab thought to portray the legend of Sigurd fighting the dragon Fafnir points to the merging of Norse pre-Christian and Christian Anglian culture. Viking North concludes by exploring the lasting cultural influence of the Vikings in the North beyond the Viking age, highlighting the influence of Old Norse language across the region.

The exhibition also presents more personal objects, such as carved antler combs, a small Thor's hammer pendant, and a fascinating runic carving from St John the Baptist Church in Kirkheaton, near Huddersfield, that help us to consider the individual people who lived during this period of transition.

And it acknowledges that a large portion of the population during this period were enslaved and almost entirely invisible from the archaeological and historical record. A stone cross fragment depicting a sword-bearing male figure with a second figure, interpreted as a captured female, may be a rare depiction of the reality of forced migration and enslavement during this period.

The themes and displays would be of particular interest to anyone studying GCSE or A-Level units exploring the impact of Viking migration in England. A helpful timeline in the first room and key facts on each case's panel present key information clearly. For those wanting more of a deep dive, removable hand-held panels offer detailed interpretation on select artefacts.

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by Dan Hicks
Hutchinson Heinemann
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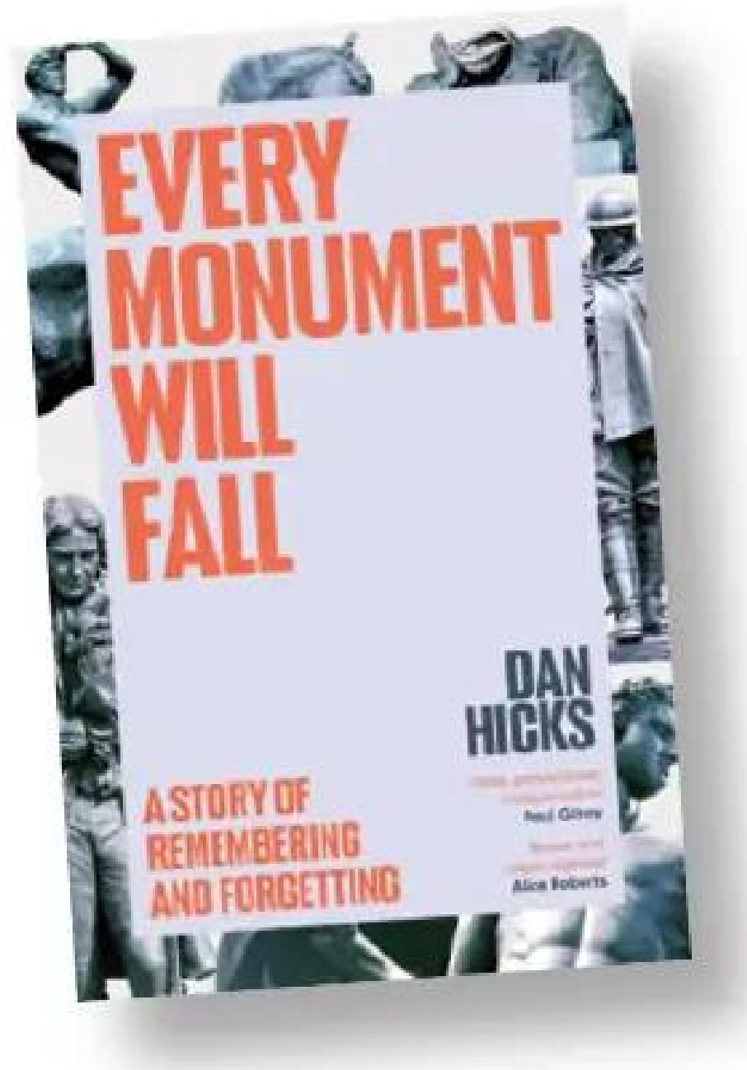


Every Monument Will Fall

Reviewed by Alison Edwards

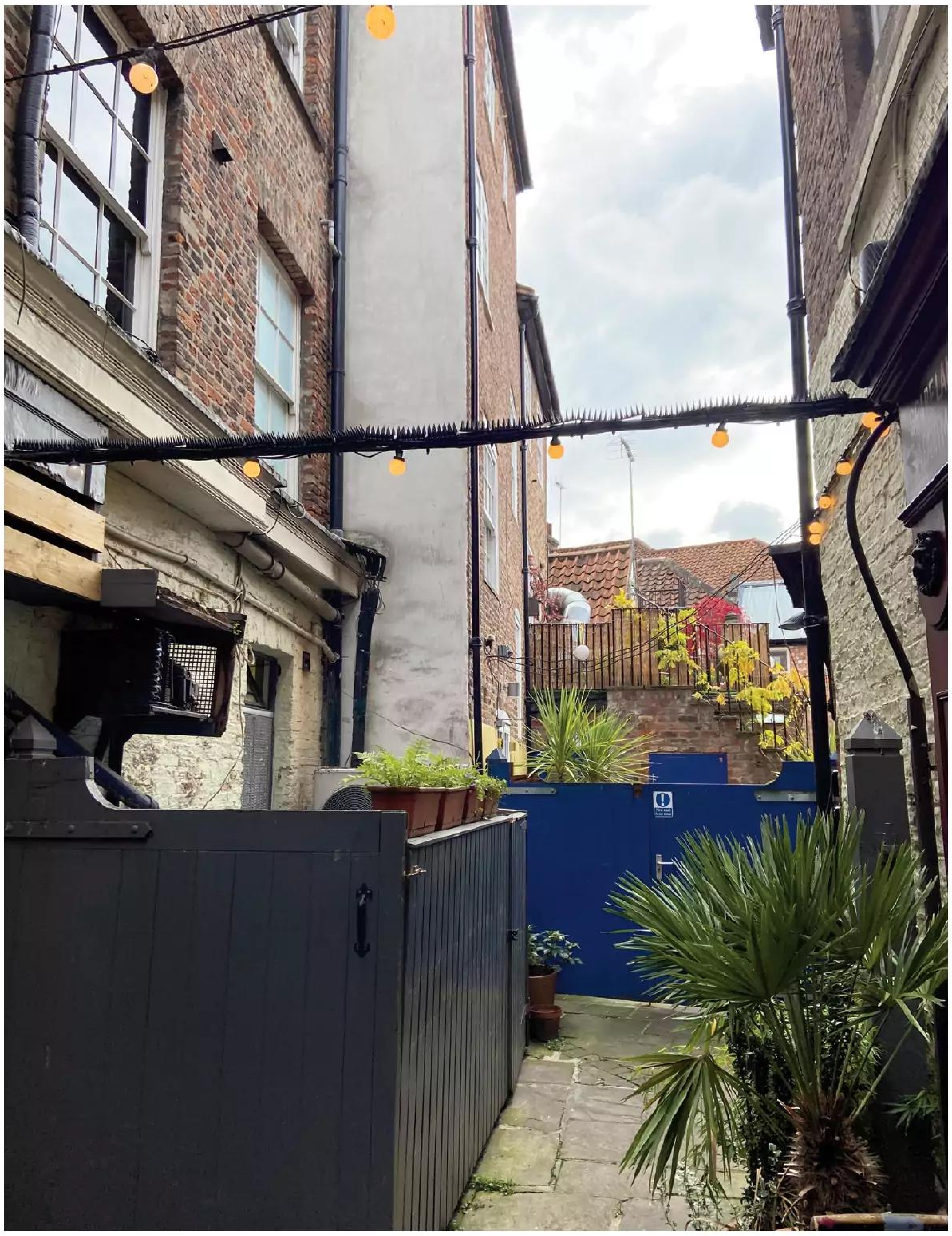
This personal and unashamedly polemical work addresses the complex and often dark history of heritage in the modern world.

Following on from his timely work *The Brutish Museums* (2020), which addressed the colonial legacies which have often gone unspoken in museum curation, this book draws on Hicks' work at the Pitt Rivers Museum, and other controversies, to argue that sometimes the loss of material heritage is the best option.

Undoubtedly, this is a book which will have a wide impact in debates over the future of museums and heritage for some time to come.

Catherine Bell, listed buildings caseworker at the Council for British Archaeology, presents an example from the council's files

83. Living above the shop



ALL PHOTOS AUTHOR'S OWN

Above right: Depending on the building, a variety of adaptations to the rear create independent access to the upper floors without impacting the principal elevation

The plight of high streets across the country is a familiar issue. The spread of large chain stores in the 1990s displaced independent retailers, creating 'clone towns'. The 2010 *Clone Town Britain Report* identified this trend as making 'our communities and high streets vulnerable to economic shocks'.

Changes in retail models to online shopping compounded the impact of the 2008 recession and subsequent economic stagnation on high streets, further fulfilling that prophesy. The decline in the vibrancy and draw of high streets which began with the loss of smaller independent businesses extended with the closure of national chains and department stores. The result is gaping empty retail units in high streets and town centres across the country.

While online retail offers consumers an amazing range of choice at prices that do not need to factor in town centre commercial rents and business rates, the character and appearance of high streets have become increasingly dilapidated and uninviting places. Above the shops, once handsome buildings appear run down; windows in need of maintenance and repair, buddleia sprouting from blocked downcomers. Who knows what the internal condition of these buildings is like?

Successive governments have commissioned reports, created task forces, appointed retail tsars and developed schemes seeking to stem the tide of urban decay in town centres, while local authority budgets for public realm works have evaporated. Keir Starmer has recently announced plans to revise planning guidance around local authorities' powers to force landowners to tidy up buildings as part of a new Pride of Place Strategy to revive town centres and public spaces.

Historic character is widely recognised as defining a local sense of place. Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zone (HS HAZ) programme, which ran between 2020 and 2024, used cultural heritage as a catalyst for regeneration. The HS HAZ programme brought clear benefits to the 67 high streets involved, but the national scale of the challenge is so much larger than this programme alone could tackle. There are clear lessons to learn from the programme's successes though. Investing in historic places stimulates growth by creating jobs and attracting investment, as well as generating a renewed sense of local pride.

Reimagining high streets as cherished community spaces makes them attractive to both local people and visitors. Local historic character is founded in the ongoing relationships between people and place.

Historically, most shops were owned/run by independent retailers with the shopkeeper and their family living upstairs. As well as being retail hubs, high streets housed a residential community. During the twentieth century there was a shift away from 'living above the shop' and upper floors became increasingly used as storage. With a national chronic shortage of housing, and urban density, being a hot topic, is the answer to empty high streets staring us in the face? Could a primary focus on the upper floors and their residential potential, rather than the retail use of the ground floor, help solve the issues with both?

The bottom line for stopping the rot to old buildings is for them to be in use. For shops to be viable they need to meet a demand. Residents are generally interested in a local area, its upkeep, and amenities. Repopulating urban 'twilight zones' diminishes shady corners. Reintroducing a residential community also reintroduces demand for ground floor retail. Not the chain stores, which are successfully operating online, but instead, the local neighbourhood shops that bring convenience and pleasure to daily life.

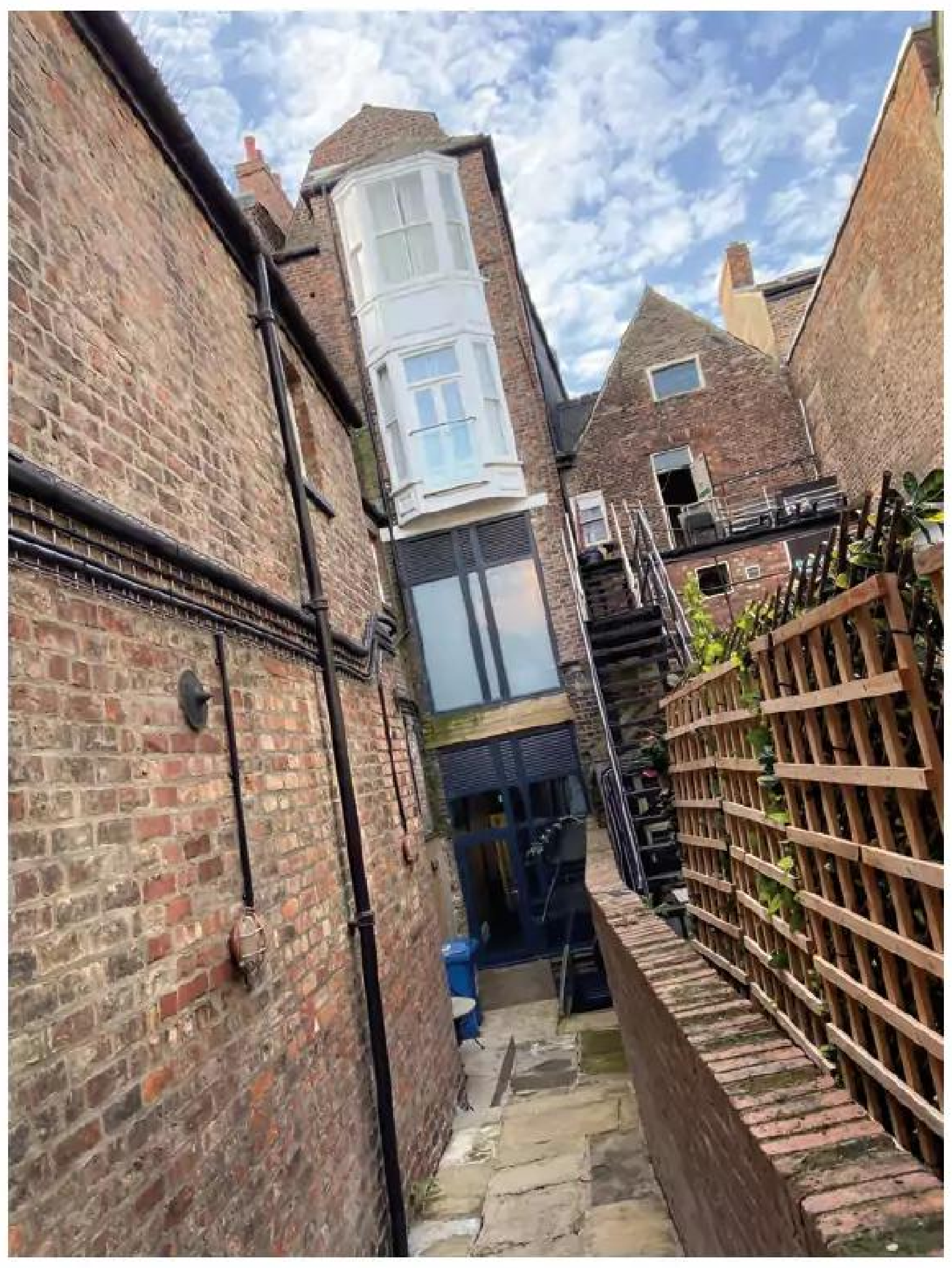
Modern life creates a craving for 'slow living'. Increased awareness of carbon footprints, sweatshop exploitation, and ultra-processed food has generated a love of the local, a desire to go back to basics. There are high streets which are thriving, which host cafes, bakeries, cobblers, green grocers, a good butcher. These high streets have a magnetic pull that creates queues out of the door of the cafes on weekends. Success appears to lie in relationships between the communities and their local sense of place. The historic development of high streets means they often have considerable time depth and include a high concentration of listed buildings, as well as often being the core of conservation areas.

There are common issues to creating independent residential use: Primarily access. The historic layout often includes first floor access through the ground floor shop. However, creating separate access need not be an insurmountable obstacle, even in most listed buildings. The historic environment is a tapestry of adaptation and change to meet shifts in people's requirements over time.

Altering external doors and stairs can have a harmful impact on the significance of listed buildings, but national planning policy is clear – this type of harm requires 'clear and convincing justification'. It is also important that proposed changes are informed by an understanding of the building's significance, and which components make important contributions to it.

Through understanding the significance of a listed building, it is possible to minimise harmful impacts to it, which can also result from vacancy and a lack of maintenance. If no tenant can be found for a ground floor retail unit, a tenant in a flat above it will at least mean the building is occupied, heated, and plumbing leaks will not go undetected.

The CBA would not readily support the loss of a high street retail unit, but finding pragmatic uses for the rest of the building has clear public benefits. Returning upper floors to domestic occupancy has the potential to deliver against the economic, social, and environmental objectives of sustainable development, a fundamental principle for decision-making in planning that runs through national planning policy as a golden thread.

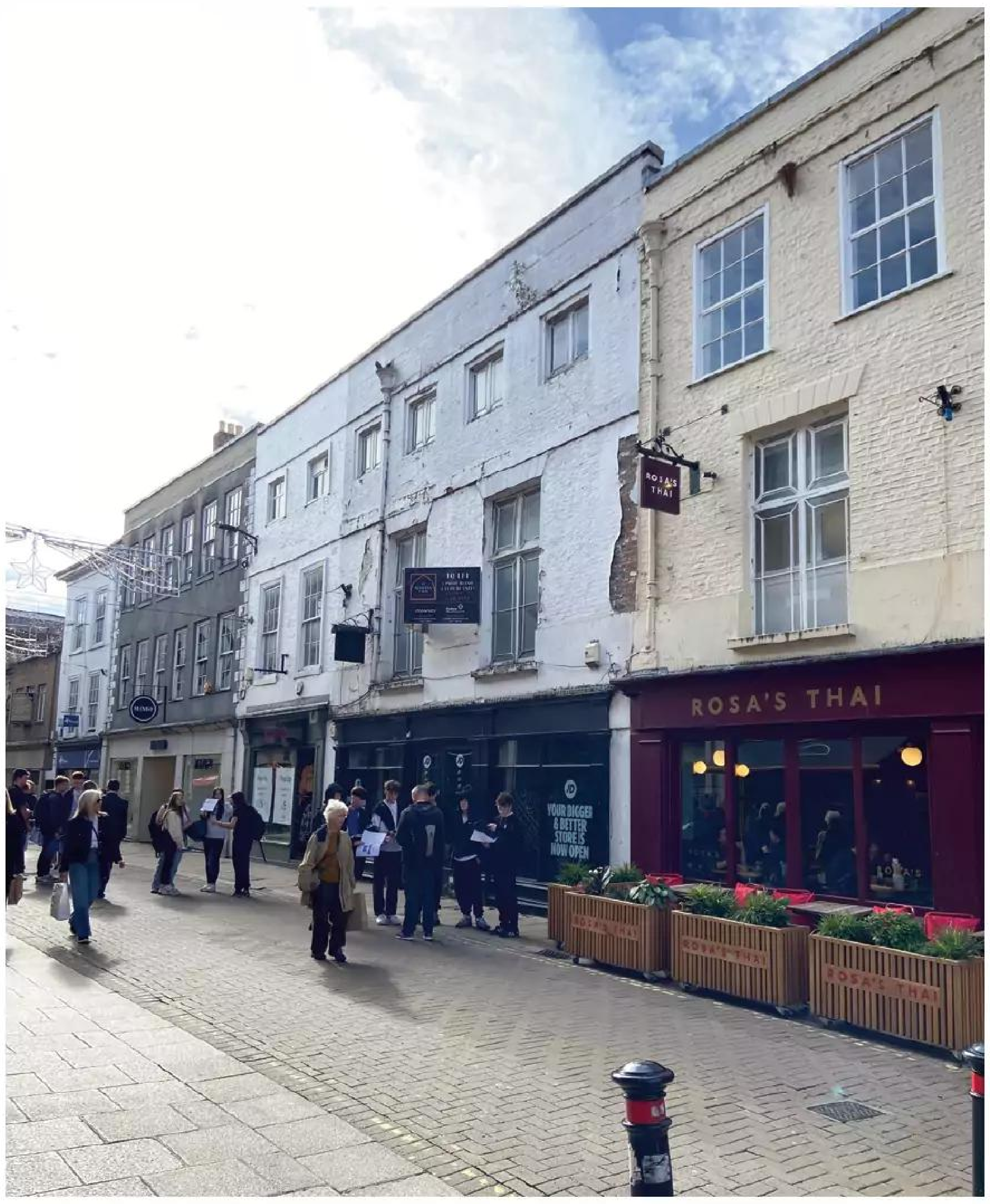


Historic England research, *New Homes from Vacant Historic Buildings* (2025), found that if 75% of the upper floors of under-occupied historic retail properties are repurposed at a conversion rate similar to a study undertaken in Nottingham's historic core, then there is a further capacity for 120,000 one-bed homes above shops.

In recent months, the CBA has reviewed a high volume of applications seeking to create an independent residential use over shops in listed buildings. We support such applications in principle and generally offer advice around how proposals could be revised to minimise any harmful impacts on a building's significance. Common themes include a level of subdivision that heavily erodes the historic plan-form of a building, amounting to over development, and creating awkward layouts that will inevitably lead to future alterations, or simply unpleasant and, therefore, unpopular homes, which are never good for the care and maintenance of a building.

Another theme is the supposition that no significant historic fabric remains inside the building, based on unsympathetic twentieth-century interventions. In reality, historic finishes are often hidden underneath. Separating the use of ground and upper floors also triggers consideration of building regulations requirements. Historic England has published helpful guidance on how these apply to listed buildings.

A good scheme of works, which largely retains the historic layout and uses materials that are appropriate for traditionally constructed buildings, has the potential to enhance and better reveal the significance of a building. The cumulative impact of returning a residential community to 'living above the shop' can restore the vitality of the high street. In essence, the presumption in favour of sustainable development makes regenerating high streets and delivering homes, while securing the future of old buildings, and reinvigorating an existing sense of place, a 'no brainer'. ■



Above left: An example of how to create rear access to a high street building

Above right: Listed buildings with under-used upper floors, displaying a visible lack of maintenance to windows and gutters. Their disrepair harms the character and appearance of the high street

Left: Bishopthorpe Road, York. An example of a thriving high street populated with independent businesses and residents living on

Dr Claire Corkill introduces the winners of the 2025 Archaeological Achievement Awards, coordinated by the Council for British Archaeology

Meet the Winners

The Archaeological Achievement Awards celebrate the best of archaeology across the UK and Ireland. The 2025 awards ceremony took place on 28 November in the Great Hall at Queen's University, Belfast, and we are delighted to share details of the winners:

Outstanding Achievement Award

Sponsored by: Department for Communities

Winner: Farming Rathcroghan – Sustainable Farming in the Rathcroghan Archaeological Landscape

Farming Rathcroghan integrates sustainable agriculture with archaeological conservation in Ireland's prehistoric/early historic royal capital of Connacht. It has co-created a results-based payment scheme for farmers, protecting monuments and cultural heritage, while enhancing biodiversity, water quality, and carbon storage. As a result, this innovative model is influencing practice across Irish heritage landscapes.

The panel of judges noted that the nomination showcased an outstanding project, which was an impressive example of a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach, which showed how working with landowners to consider archaeology and sustainability highlighted how communities can be involved in this type of work.

The project brought together multiple stakeholders to educate and empower the custodians of the Rathcroghan landscape to protect it, in an effort to preserve and promote its archaeological importance, while also implementing more sustainable approaches to farming techniques to safeguard this monumental landscape for all. The project is both wonderful and inspiring, and we feel it is sure to leave a tremendous legacy for future generations.

Engagement and Participation

Sponsored by: University Archaeology UK

Judges felt there was a really strong field of contenders in this category and chose to jointly award two of the shortlisted nominations, which offered high-quality engagement experiences for volunteers, and that highlight the equitable and inclusive ways in which people can get involved in archaeology, and create a sense of place and belonging.

Winner: The Big Bronze Age Boat Build (BBABB)

Volunteers at Stanwick Lakes worked alongside Ancient Craft to bring prehistory to life through an ambitious heritage initiative. Using replica Bronze Age tools, volunteers carved and launched dugout boats. From timber selection to launch event planning, they led every step, sharing their learning journey with visitors throughout.

This exceptional project offered a diverse and highly immersive range of volunteering experiences fostering collaboration with a range of partners and enabling participants to build strong connections with the past, with one another, and with Stanwick Lakes.

The judges scored it particularly highly for sustainability and legacy, with some volunteers continuing their involvement independently of the project and contributing to plans for another phase of experimental archaeology at Stanwick, building on the skills and interest generated.

Winner: The Close – The Archaeology of Romany Gypsies

The project undertook Britain's first ever archaeological excavation of a historic Romany Gypsy site. The project was run by Romany people and worked alongside disadvantaged Romany people to uncover the story of Britain's 'Gypsy Compound' and 'Gypsy Rehabilitation Centre' systems, sites of forced assimilation that existed until 1979.

Judges felt that this was a landmark project, respectfully involving participants from the community to develop archaeological and craft-based skills, and to document and share the process. The judges were especially impressed with the commitment to EDI (equity, diversity and inclusion) and co-production.

The Romany Gypsy community was consulted and involved at every stage, and their knowledge and interests shaped the direction of the project, and the narratives that were disseminated.

Early Career Archaeologist

Sponsored by: The Royal Archaeological Institute

Winner: Kayleigh Hibberd

Kayleigh successfully completed her Archaeological Technician Apprenticeship Level 3 with the Changing Chalk Project in May. This represented a career change into archaeology having previously worked at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, and human resources for a chiropractors. She has worked with the Changing Chalk project since she passed her apprenticeship.

Judges agreed that Kayleigh has not only excelled within her training but also sought out additional experiences and opportunities to support her career. She is already making significant contributions to a number of different organisations and enthusing the public about caring for the past.

Overall, the panel was impressed with her dedication, stamina, and thoughtfulness, and her engagement with everyone they meet.

Highly commended: Melissa Lambe

Archaeology and Sustainability

Sponsored by: National Highways

Winner: Farming Rathcroghan – Sustainable Farming in the Rathcroghan Archaeological Landscape

Farming Rathcroghan's innovative integration of sustainable agriculture with archaeological conservation sets a new standard for community-led heritage stewardship.

The project not only protects vital monuments and enhances biodiversity, soil health, and water quality, but also empowers local farmers as active heritage keepers and educators, serving as a national and international model for sustainability in cultural landscapes.

Its leadership in results-based agri-environmental policy, inclusive governance, and impactful collaboration across sectors justifies its recognition with the Archaeology & Sustainability award.

Highly commended: Huttons Ambo Landscape Project

Public Dissemination or Presentation

Sponsored by: Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland

Winner: St Anne's Park Community Archaeology Project (STACAP)

A diverse, annually evolving programme of exciting activities and events centred on a community excavation of the former Guinness mansion of St Anne's. It includes training programmes for transition year students and tour guides, educational tours for schools, public lectures, community-led post excavation, and public outreach events.

St Anne's Park Community Archaeology Project impressed across the board through its work to greatly enhance the public understanding of the site. The project worked hard to place as few barriers as possible to participation, and the outstanding use of multiple platforms to communicate and present, including engaging with diverse groups, resulted in outstanding levels of EDI.

An amazing and incredibly impressive project, and a very worthy winner.

Highly commended: Rediscovering High Angle Battery; and People, Pots and Places

Learning, Training, and Skills

Sponsored by: AMS

Winner: Teffont Archaeology Project

Teffont Archaeology Project is a long-running landscape and excavation research project in southwest Wiltshire, which also encompasses work co-directed with volunteers (Coombe Bissett, with Alyson Tanner) or collaborators (Chalke Valley villa, with Chalke and Chase Landscape Partnership). They place inclusion and training at the forefront of their work.

Judges agreed this was a longstanding, collaborative project supporting both the empowerment of volunteers/carers and facilitating entry routes into archaeology/heritage careers for those from underrepresented backgrounds. The project showcases an impressive range of learning and training opportunities delivered in a well-organised, supportive environment, with inclusivity and welfare at their core. A wonderful, impactful project with a great legacy of celebrating archaeology and breaking down barriers.

Left: Teffont team working on site at TEF23

ALBERT BARNES/TEFFONT ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT

Left: Kayleigh working at Cooden

CHANGING CHALK

Left: The Close was Britain's first ever archaeological excavation of a historic Romany Gypsy site

THE CLOSE

Above: Event organised by Farming Rathcroghan and Teagasc, planting and managing mixed native hedgerows. This reintroduces our participant farmers to the traditional skills of managing field boundaries, while informing them of how these practices benefit habitats on their farms

FARMING RATHCROGHAN AND TEAGASC

Highly commended: Oxford Archaeology's Fieldwork Training Pathways

Find out more

Find out more about the incredible projects shortlisted for the 2025 awards: www.archaeologyuk.org/resource/2025-archaeological-achievement-awards-shortlist.html.

You can also watch highlights of the awards ceremony on our YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/@CouncilforBritishArchaeology), including performances from our host, poet Morgan L Ventura, Footnotes Productions, and Ancient Music Ireland, and presentations from Grace McAlister, project officer with Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust, and the Department of Communities.

Congratulations and thanks

We would also like to express our gratitude to all of the judges for their time and commitment to the awards. Finally, we would like to express our thanks to all of the funders and sponsors who make the awards possible, in particular the Department for Communities, the 2025 principle funder, and Queen's University Belfast for providing the venue for the awards ceremony.

We would also like to thank CIfA and ALGAO for supporting the travel bursaries. 🟩

Rachel Bishop, youth engagement officer at the Council for British Archaeology, reports on the world of young and aspiring archaeologists

Young Archaeologists' Club Dig It! Diaries 2025

ALL PHOTOS CBA

Clockwise from top left: Lukas at Ancrum Mantle Walls; Guhan excavating at the Chester House Estate; Mia uncovering a piece of limestone at Moira Demesne; Tilly with new finds from Irchester

The Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC) annual Dig It! competition returned for the summer of 2025. The competition offers YAC members aged between eight and 16 years old the chance to spend a day working alongside real archaeologists at some fascinating excavations.

In 2025, we ran competitions at seven sites across the UK. Nineteen winners participated in excavations, washing finds and learning about the different types of equipment used. Each winner received a haversack of archaeological tools kindly donated by Past Horizons. We were also delighted to offer each winner a bursary to help cover the costs of their travel and accommodation at each site, generously provided by the Marsh Charitable Trust.

Some of our winners shared their experiences with us, so read on to hear how they got on.

Moira Demesne

Our first Dig It! day took place at the community excavation at Moira Demesne, near Lisburn in Northern Ireland, with the team from Queens University Belfast.

Mia from Belfast YAC, told us: "While we were excavating, I noticed a large white rock sticking out of the ground. I took off all of the soil around it and archaeologist Brian told me that it was an important find, as it might've been one of the slabs of limestone that was used to build the mansion that used to stand there. Brian said that children are better archaeologists than adults because they're closer to the ground." She added: "Being one of the winners of the Dig It! competition and spending a whole day excavating at Moira Demesne was a dream come true. I really enjoyed my day out and learnt lots of new things."

Irchester

The next competition day took place at Chester House Estate near Northampton where archaeologists from the University of Leicester have been excavating the Roman town of Irchester.

Tilly, from Rhonnda Cynon Taff YAC, reported: "The archaeologists on site were brilliant and they told me all about my discoveries and helped me to identify what I had found. It was one of the best days I have ever had and now I want to be an archaeologist even more when I grow up."

Guhan from Solihull YAC also took part; he added: "The dig site was near a Roman settlement from almost 2,000 years ago. I got to use a radar for geophysics to look for archaeology underground. After spending a day at Chester House Estate, I realised archaeology takes a lot of patience and teamwork. It's definitely not as quick and easy as the Indiana Jones movies."

Bamburgh Castle

The Bamburgh Research Project (BRP) team have been excavating at Bamburgh Castle, Northumberland. Joining them for a day was Abbie, from Mersey and Dee YAC, who reported: "First, we had a tour of the castle and learnt about the burials that were found just outside the grounds of the castle in the sand dunes."

She added: "We then went to the dig site, which looked amazing. Lots of animal bones came out, there was cow, pig, sheep, and even cod vertebrae. We also did sieving and I found what looks like either a pin or part of a brooch."

Ollie from Sheffield YAC also shared his experience: "My favourite item I found was a 1,000-year-old horse hoof. I learnt how to excavate using my brush and trowel, and found lots and lots of bones. I now understand more about how a dig site works and how artefacts are looked after."

Basingwerk Abbey

The next competition was hosted by Heneb at Basingwerk Abbey in northeast Wales. Liliwen, from Ludlow YAC, told us: "The site was a known medieval site but the archaeologists had already uncovered Roman artefacts and they were in the process of uncovering a Roman road. It

Clockwise, from far left: Abbie with her new satchel of archaeological tools at Bamburgh Castle; Elijah viewing 3D images of the site at Newbattle Abbey College; Ollie digging at Bamburgh Castle; Dylan with some finds from Cookham; Liliwen and David digging at Basingwerk Abbey

was so exciting. The whole day was a wonderful experience and I did not want it to end."

David, from North Wiltshire YAC, added: "We found bits of pottery and in the last hour we found three or four post holes. We also did some finds washing and learnt lots of facts and techniques about finds washing."

Cookham

From Romans to Anglo-Saxons, the next site for our competition winners was the site of an Anglo-Saxon monastery in Cookham, Berkshire, hosted by the University of Leicester.

Excavating with them was Dylan, from Worcestershire YAC: "Trench 1 at Cookham Abbey featured living quarters with various buildings indicated by lines of post holes, a well and a leat where a water wheel would likely have been, and lots of rubbish dumps! As a result, a lot of the finds in this area are animal bones and other remains of food items."

He added: "After being in Trench 1, we headed over to the flotation tanks. I had never done flotation before, and it was really fun. Saving the best till last, we were able to work in the cemetery trench. It's interesting to see that some of the skeletons had been pushed into different positions as more people at later times were needing to be buried."

Newbattle Abbey College

Archaeology Scotland offered our competition winners the exciting opportunity to dig at Newbattle Abbey College in Dalkeith.

Elijah from RAF Museum Midlands YAC, told us: "The archaeologists at the dig were friendly and knowledgeable. They showed me how to use LiDAR with their iPad to create 3D images of the dig site and objects, which was amazing. I was very excited to be going to the dig, and I made some incredible discoveries, like bottle shards, copper wire, a fuel cap, and a shotgun cartridge."

Ancrum Mantle Walls

The final competition of the year was hosted by HARP at Ancrum Mantle Walls in the Scottish borders. Lukas, from the Sill YAC, said: "It was hard work. The ground was really firm and we made quite slow progress until Michelle, who was leading our group, got a pickaxe out to break up some of the earth".

He added: "After that we did some field-walking, which was my favourite bit. It was really cool to see lots of stuff on the ground that you wouldn't normally notice – not just artefacts like pottery and bones, but also frogs and insects."

Spring 2026

The experiences offered to our young archaeologists through the Dig It! competition would not be possible without the archaeological organisations that kindly host our winners at their sites. We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who supported this year's winners, as well as to the Marsh Charitable Trust and Past Horizons.

We are always looking for new sites who may be able to host winners next year and look forward to launching 2026's Dig It! in spring 2026. ■

Tudor tart

In this activity, you can try your hand at recreating a recipe with nutmeg as its star.

Get a taste of sixteenth-century feasting with our delicious recipe for a Tudor-inspired cheesecake tart.

Sugar was rare and expensive in the Tudor period (1485-1603), so sweet dishes relied on the natural sweetness of other ingredients, such as honey, fruits, and spices to balance buttery pastry and rich creamy cheeses.

The increase of global trade in this period meant that more wealthy households could purchase spices, such as cinnamon, ginger, anise, and cloves to flavour their dishes.

Perhaps the most prized of all spices was nutmeg, transported from the Banda Islands in Indonesia.

In the seventeenth century it even became fashionable for wealthy European diners to carry their own pocket-sized nutmeg graters to flaunt their expensive taste.

This recipe is inspired by several recipes from the period 1500-1700 that made pricey nutmeg the star ingredient. You can get creative and swap the lemon for an orange, or experiment with small amounts of different ground spices, such as cloves and mace. ■

Activity: Baking a tart that the Tudors would love

Ingredients

- Approx 350g short crust pastry dough (homemade or shop-bought), rolled to the thickness of a pound coin
- Butter for greasing the tin
- 500g ricotta or curd cheese
- 200g sour cream
- 100g golden caster sugar
- 1 lemon, zested
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 3 tbsp currants or raisins (or a mix)
- 2 tbsp ground almonds
- ¼ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- A small pinch of sea salt
- Whole blanched almonds to decorate

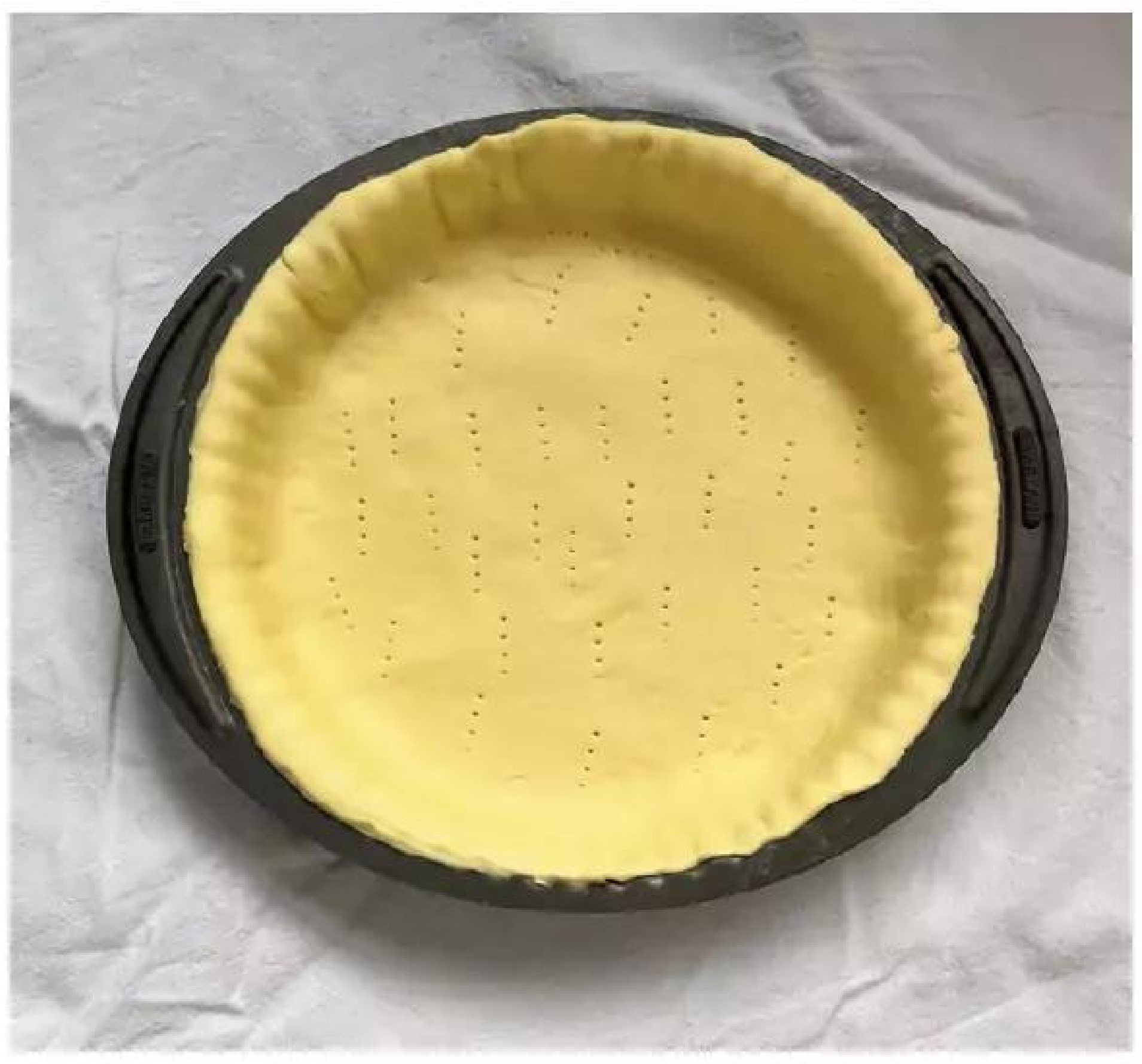
Equipment :

- 23cm tart tin
- A circle of baking paper to line the base of the tin
- A large piece of baking paper
- Baking beans or rice
- A large mixing bowl
- Wooden spoon
- A small knife

Visit www. yac-uk.org for more

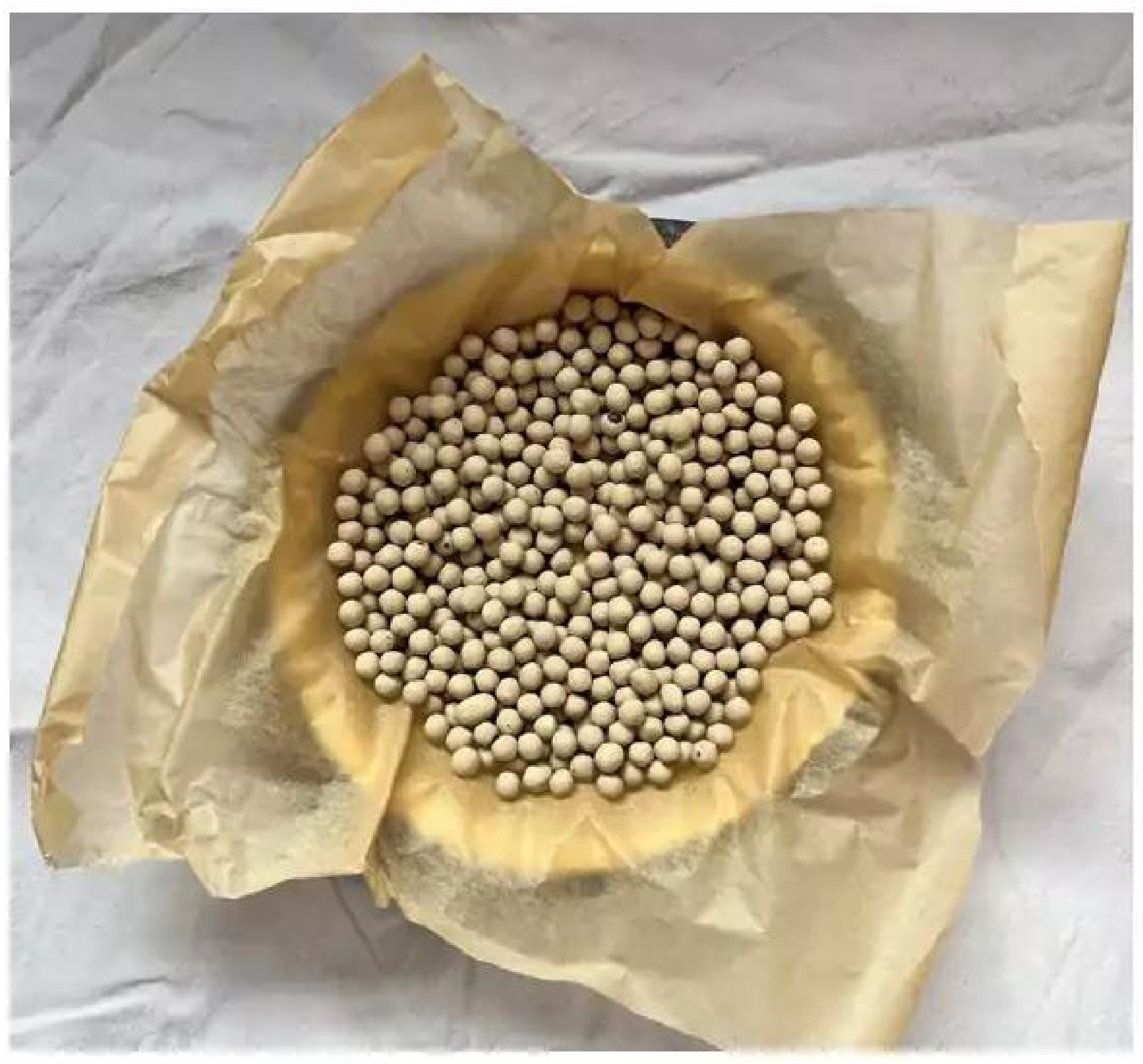
Method

1



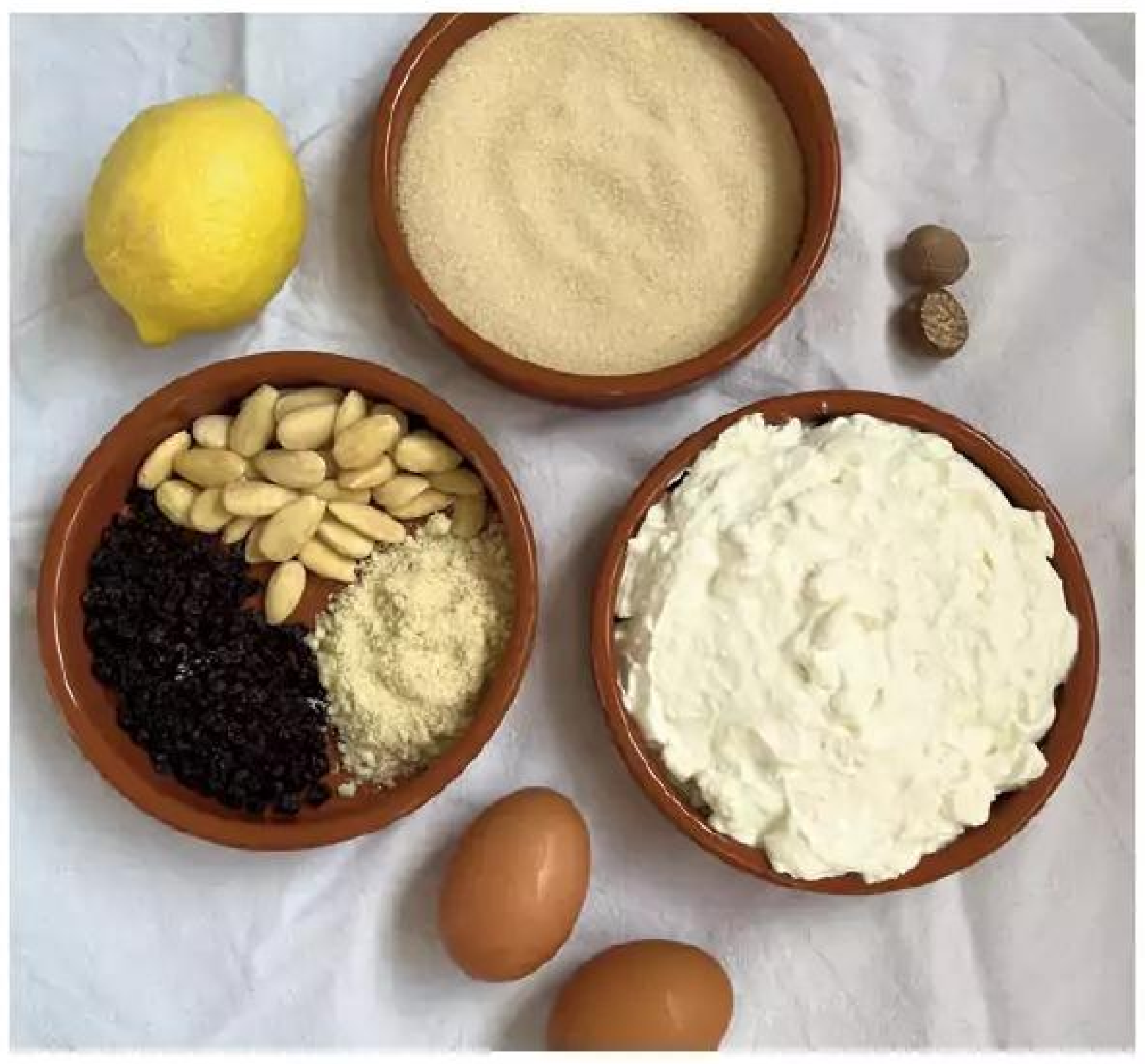
Place a circle of baking paper at the bottom of your tin and rub butter around the edges. Place your rolled sheet of pastry over your tin and gently press into place using a small scrap of pastry to avoid tears. Trim the edges with a small knife. Prick the bottom with a fork and then refrigerate for 30 minutes. Heat the oven to 180°c, or 160°c if using a fan-assisted oven.

2



Cover your pastry case with the large sheet of baking paper and pour in the baking beans or rice. Blind bake for 15 minutes, then remove the beans and paper and bake for a further 5 minutes until a light golden brown colour. Don't worry if your tart has slightly uneven edges – you can neaten it up later.

3



Meanwhile, prepare the ingredients for your filling. Zest the lemon, finely grate the nutmeg, and break the eggs into a small bowl.

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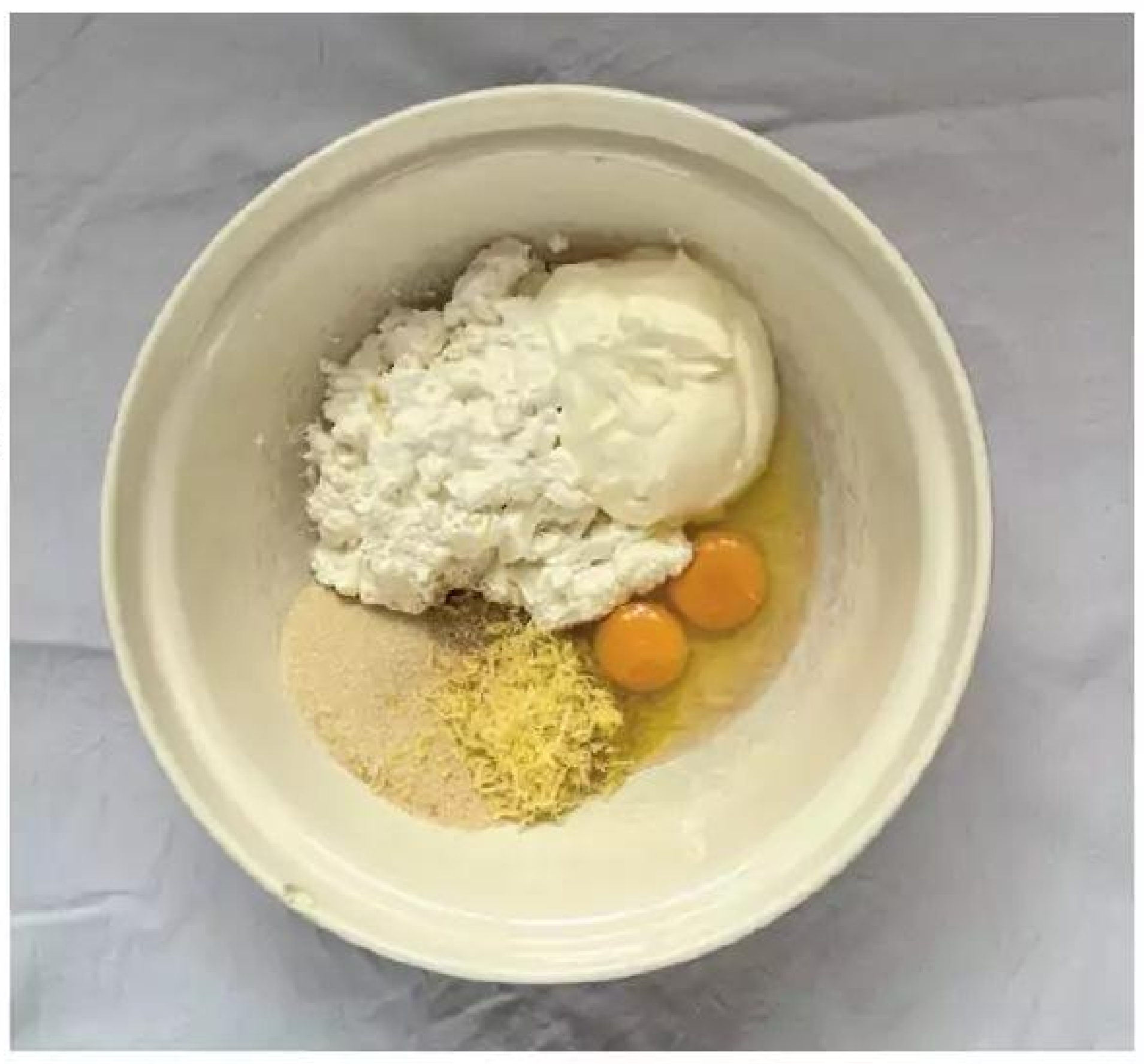
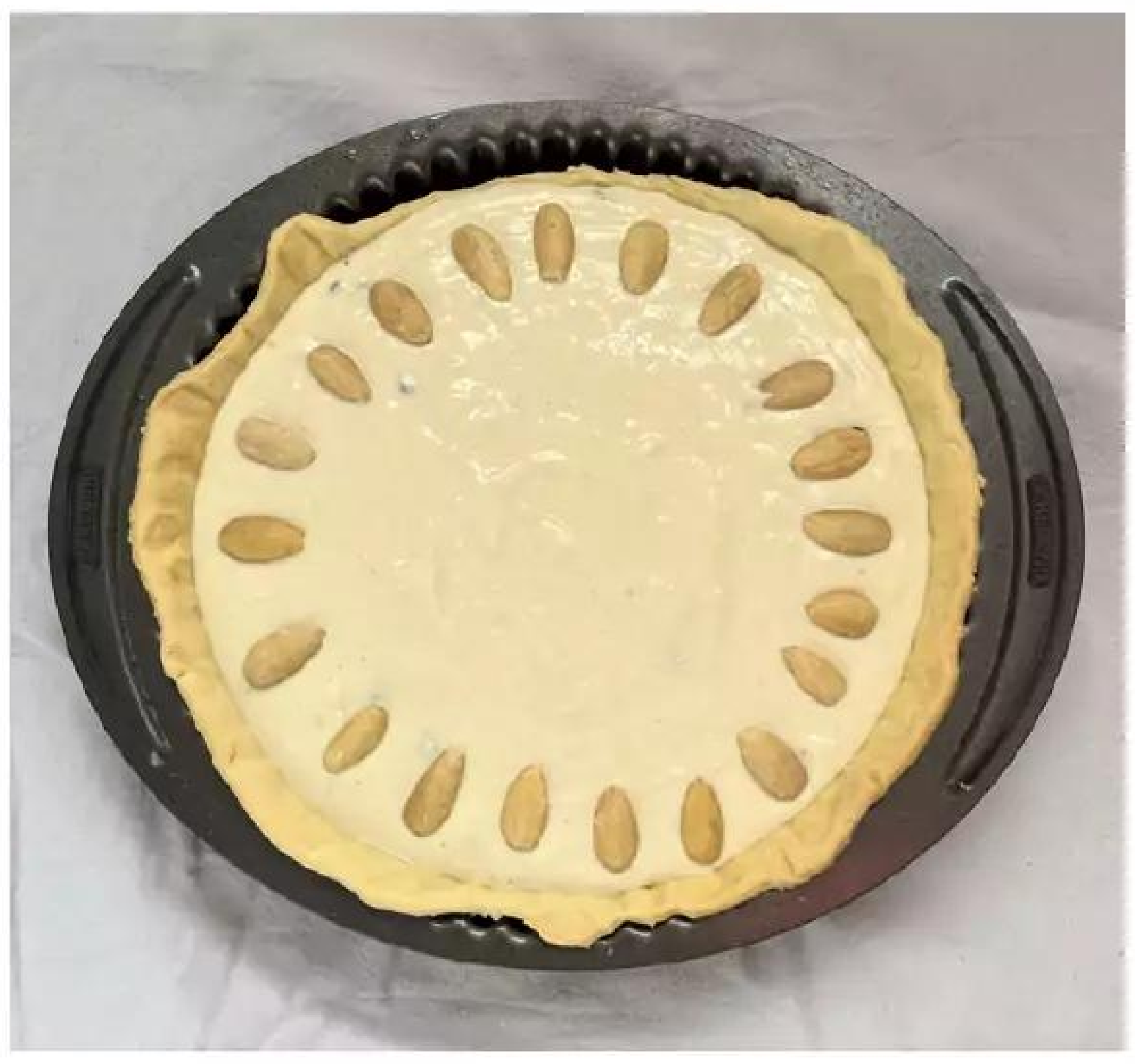


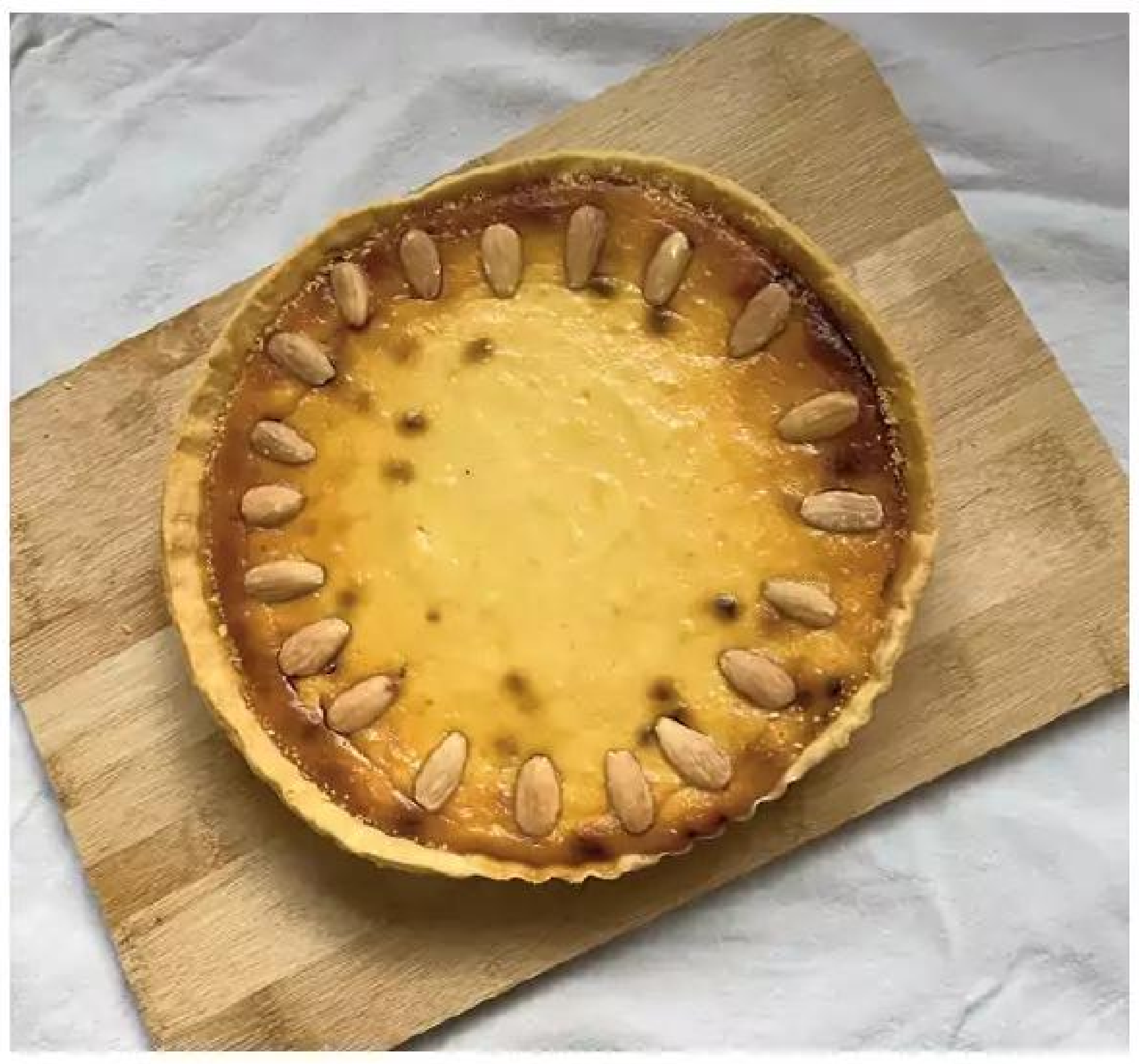
Put the ricotta or curd cheese in a large mixing bowl with the sour cream, sugar, lemon zest, eggs, grated nutmeg, and salt. Mix with a wooden spoon until well combined. Add the ground almonds and currants or raisins and gently stir to combine.

5



Transfer the mix into your tart tin and arrange the almonds on top. Bake at 180°c/160°c fan for 1 hour 10 minutes until set but very slightly wobbly and a lovely caramel colour. Then turn the oven off and leave to cool down gradually in the oven for 1 hour before removing.

6



Carefully trim the edges with a sharp knife then refrigerate overnight. Enjoy the next day as part of a Tudor banquet (or at home with a cup of tea).

Mike Corbishley

Mike Corbishley was one of the most influential British archaeologists of the last 60 years; he is described as the pioneer of the relationship between archaeology and education, inspiring in many a lifelong passion for the subject. His long career spanned all aspects of archaeology and education, he was a doer, always practical in his teaching and always a prolific writer, producing more than 60 books on a staggeringly wide range of subjects.

Mike was born on 11 December 1943, the oldest son of Psyche Lyons and Henry (Harry) Corbishley. He and his younger brother Bernard had a childhood of adventures that provided the many stories that Mike often used in his teaching. After school, he studied Classics at the University of Bangor, where he met his future wife, Gillian Mortlock.

After graduating Mike and Gill drove to Yugoslavia to get married, and on discovering the British Consulate did not have a marriage license they famously continued on to Athens where they did (eventually) find an embassy with a marriage license. As a result, they both developed a lifelong love of Greece.

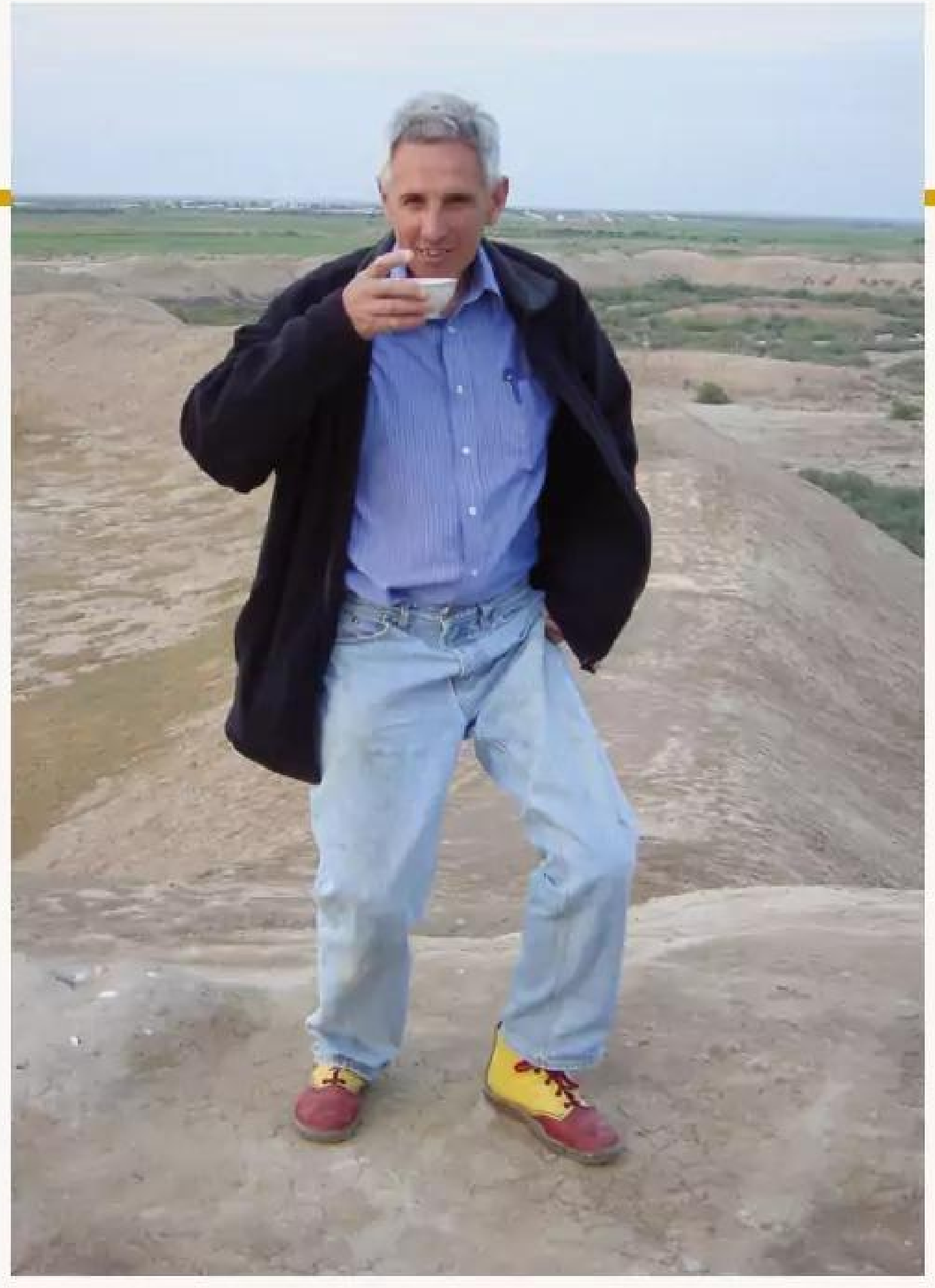
After Bangor, Mike secured a post teaching History and Classics at Colchester Royal Grammar School in 1966. There he rapidly developed an archaeology programme and the school became one of only two in the UK to teach A-level archaeology from the early 1970s.

Mike was practical, always going beyond the classroom with his students taking part in excavations, such as Hadleigh Ring Ditch and Little Oakley Roman Villa. Mike memorably would drive the equipment (and his students) to sites in his old Moskvich; he made his students part of his family. At the same time Mike was establishing his teaching career he was also a part-time tutor for the Workers' Education Association (WEA).

Mike was a highly accomplished excavator and a key member of the Wroxeter Roman City excavations, directed by the late Philip Barker, from 1966 until 1990. Mike spent several summer weeks every year there with his family – Gill, daughter Hannah, and their many dogs – contributing to every aspect of the excavation and welfare of the large team of 'diggers' (not least 'historical' film nights, dressed as an usherette).

Mike was a founding member (along with Kate Pretty) of Young Rescue in 1972. In 1977, he became the first education officer at the CBA (which had absorbed Young Rescue as Young Archaeologists' Club). At the CBA, Mike broadened educational engagement from secondary to primary schools, creating new curricula for the then O and A-levels in archaeology and ensuring that it contributed to the widest range of other subjects. Like many of his achievements he had to first create the post (with funding he secured via Lloyds Bank and the Leverhulme Trust).

In 1984 Mike moved to the newly created Education Service at English Heritage, first as a regional education officer, and then for 15 years as head of education. During his time, the education service expanded to include more education officers, and he pioneered the production of educational programmes, with literature, videos, and site-specific material; he also secured funding for education officers and facilities on active excavations, supporting school visits and broader public engagement. His work demonstrated the public value of archaeology at a time when grassroots and community archaeology were the backbone of the discipline.



After leaving English Heritage in 2003, Mike was invited by Peter Ucko to join University College London as a senior lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology. Here Mike developed an MA course in Archaeology and Education. He also had time to write his book *Pinning Down the Past - Archaeology, Heritage and Education Today*. His students benefited from his enthusiasm, knowledge, and dedication to archaeology, heritage, and education.

Beyond the UK, many archaeological education programmes around the world developed from Mike's teaching. Indeed, he continued to promote archaeological education at every level. At Ancient Merv, in Turkmenistan he worked with excavators and local teachers to develop projects in schools, working with them to produce a Turkmen language resource book to support teachers in the classroom and on site. In Greece, Mike not only taught the one and only course on heritage and education but also laid a foundation for programmes that introduced archaeology to younger people.

Mike will be remembered as a pioneer of archaeological education. He always had a personal perspective that he brought to everything, underpinned by his belief in making things understandable: His practical skills (from fixing leaking roofs and building smokehouses, to fixing site interpretation) could always be relied upon. His passion was not constrained by chronology or geography, but covered every aspect of the subject, supported by a devotion to practical field archaeology and a desire to engage as many people as possible with the past through learning.

Mike and Gill created wonderful homes, at Rose Cottage in Essex, and in Greece, where they were always warm and generous hosts. Mike's final excavation in the last few years was to support Great Oakley Church – it is unlikely that any church reordering has ever been subject to such a detailed archaeological assessment.

Mike strongly believed in getting on and doing things, as well as talking about things – he was one of the brightest, most determined, entertaining, and dedicated archaeological educators and teachers; he has left an enormous impact on the lives and careers of all who were lucky enough to work with him and become part of his archaeology family. He is survived by his wife Gill, daughter Hannah, son-in-law Sean, and grandchildren Isabel and Lily.

In memory of Mike Corbishley who passed away on 3 October 2025, aged 81.

A lifelong legacy

by Joanne Kirton, delivery and engagement manager, CBA

The Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC) continues to go from strength to strength since the inception of Young Rescue in the early 1970's. It now has YAC clubs situated across the UK with new clubs opening monthly. As of Autumn 2025, we have 80 clubs, supported by over 500 volunteers and enjoyed by over 2,000 members. Typically, the YAC Network offers 10,000 session places annually for its members aged 8-16 and further opportunities to develop as Young Leaders at post-16. It is the only UK-wide archaeology club that offers regular hands-on activities for its members, from digs to non-invasive survey.

Our Annual Impact Report has demonstrated that our YAC members are happier with their life as a whole and it contributes significantly to their self-esteem, confidence, and love for learning. It does this by bringing archaeology to life and by creating a sense of belonging among its members, who can explore their passion for archaeology and history together. YAC also nurtures a long-term interest and/or career aspirations in archaeology.

Since the launch of Young Rescue 53 years ago(!), we estimate that there are at least 25,000 YAC alumni (possibly as many as 50,000), and many more volunteers, who have enjoyed everything the YAC has to offer, and many of whom have become life-long advocates for archaeology and heritage throughout the UK. This is an outstanding achievement, so thank you Mike (and Kate) – a truly incredible legacy.

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